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A MODERN HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE

A MODERN HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE

By

R. H. GRETTON

VOLUME II 1899-1910

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CHAPTER I

ENGLAND IN 1899

ENGLAND in 1899 hardly represented the ideal spectacle of a people on the eve of a relentless trial of its spirit. The national temper at the moment was a curious mixture of hilarity and moodiness, of assurance and anxious calculations, of energy and hesitation. So indeterminate were feeling and purpose that a generally warlike disposition was presently to greet the actual outbreak of war as a thunderbolt. Politics were at an unhealthy pause, social life in an equally unhealthy fever. In commerce an unparalleled volume of business was being regarded almost askance; prosperity was felt to be founded upon ill-considered and inadequate business methods. In this matter, as in others, the country was in an introspective frame of mind. Many elements in its activities were seen to be false. Such perception, however, formed no real preparedness for the ordeal of the melting pot. The quality of the national metal was not doubted: only its shape and the keenness of its edge were in question.

The futility of current political exchanges was obvious in each of the three political parties. The Conservative Government could not feel much interest in proposing home legislation while South African affairs were assuming daily a more menacing aspect. The Conservative majority was so large that marking time involved no danger in the division lobbies. Moreover, the Government had little to fear from an Opposition more than half paralysed by internal divisions. These had now become acute. In

December 1898 Sir William Harcourt had declined to lead any longer; and in the ensuing correspondence between him and Mr John Morley (which formed the vehicle for conveying Sir William Harcourt's decision to the public) there had been exasperated revelations of the conflict of opinion, the sectional disagreements rife among Liberals. The deepest cause of division was one which in the next two or three years was to operate more and more violently —the division to be represented under the labels Liberal Imperialist and Little Englander. Ever since the Jameson Raid there had been within the Liberals a group which regarded with the utmost suspicion the Conservative policy of expansion, believing it to involve an immoral concentration of purpose on aggrandisement. The Soudan campaign and the annexation of the Soudan, so deeply altering our position in Egypt, provided food for this belief; the victory at Omdurman appeared to these men unnecessarily murderous, and the destruction of the Mahdi's tomb and the exhumation of his body (deliberately undertaken to prevent a revival of fanaticism) they criticised as barbarous acts. This group, composed of active and energetic men, watching with gravest misgivings the trend of affairs in South Africa, was able to make its current of opinion a marked one in the party. On the other hand, many Liberals thought such views were too straitened, and that moreover they were coloured by an unpraiseworthy dislike and distrust of Mr Chamberlain's personality. The rescue of the Soudan from the Khalifa was, they said, after all, an advance of civilisation in a dark spot of the earth; and, as for South Africa, it was strange for Liberalism to be in the position of defending a state of affairs in which half a population was being taxed without representation. (For, of course, the Little Englander's criticisms of Mr Chamberlain's methods in regard to the Transvaal were readily made to appear as a defence of President Kruger's.) Lord Rosebery was

generally looked on as leader of the Liberal Imperialists, but here again a side current was working. A good many Liberals who had little sympathy with anti-Imperialism considered that Lord Rosebery showed a propensity towards sentimental jingoism, and was too ready to treat the acquisition of any swamp in South Africa as of greater importance than conditions in England. There was prevalent also a feeling that the Liberal party had let slip its opportunity of guiding democratic impulse. Mr Gladstone, we have seen, had frankly held his leadership from 1886 to 1894 for one purpose only—Home Rule; he had been followed by Lord Rosebery, who had shown little sympathy for democratic movements; and Lord Rosebery had been succeeded by Sir William Harcourt, who was in every sense a Whig. That the urgent need, as well as the propelling force, of Social Reform seemed to have passed the party by was the feeling of a letter published in 1899 by a group of young Oxford Liberals—unknown at the time but to be known honourably enough before long. In this year they added to the resources of Liberalism a weekly organ—*The Speaker*.

In view of the dissensions among Liberals, it was small wonder that Professor Goldwin Smith, writing one of his letters of a looker-on from Canada, should say that what was wanted in 1899 was rather a party than a leader. But it was with the choice of a leader the disagreements at the moment were most concerned. The difficulties of this choice were so ludicrously public that *The Daily Mail* rushed in with the proposal of a plebiscite as to the future policy of the party and who should be its leader. It was all very well to say, as some Liberals did,[1] that the divisions and manœuvres were confined to the House of Commons, and counted for little in the country at large.

[1] See, for instance, an article by Dr Guinness Rogers in *The Nineteenth Century*, January 1899.

Even if that were true for the moment, it necessarily ceased to be true before very long, since Members of Parliament inevitably put their own points of view before their constituents, and the latter, in approving or disapproving them, began to share in the same divergences.

The third party in the House of Commons—the Irish Party—was at this time ineffective too. In the autumn of 1898 there had been an attempt, headed by Mr John Dillon, to close the breach caused seven years earlier by the disastrous accompaniments of the fall of Parnell: the attempt was renewed early in 1899. But it had failed; the party remained in two unequal sections, and, as a whole, was morose and powerless. Lord Rosebery's coolness towards Home Rule [1] seemed to have its sequel this year in a statement from Sir Henry Fowler that the Liberal alliance with the Irish was at an end.[2] It was true the formula employed said that the Irish party felt itself stronger in independence of English parties; but here was another source of cleavage for Liberal opinion. There were many Liberals who could not but bitterly resent the suggestion that certain of their colleagues looked on Home Rule as a policy to be taken up or set down at convenience.

When we turn from this confusion in politics to the world of commerce we come on a state of things that might have apparently given unmitigated cause for satisfaction. At the opening of 1899 the prospects in all trades were good. Shipbuilding had risen to a record output in 1898, and it showed no tendency to slacken. The White Star ship *Oceanic* was launched in 1899 and, with her length of 705 feet and tonnage of 17,040, she opened a new era of colossal merchant vessels. So great was activity in the spinning trade that the only apprehension felt was lest too many mills were being erected. The

[1] Vol i., page 349.
[2] *The Times*, 3rd February 1899.

iron and steel works were busy, almost to their limits of capacity. The chemical trade, though its equipment was stated to be rather behindhand as compared with that of the German chemists, was making the most of its facilities. Even farming had a share in the general prosperity. Since the depression in 1879 and 1880 a new generation of farmers had been growing up, men more ready than their fathers to experiment, to take advantage of new machinery, to relinquish the unprofitable grain crops to which the earlier generation had clung as to its honour. Lowered rents, better means of communication, had achieved something; and, though improvement in method, co-operation, the use of light railways, consideration of market requirements, advanced so slowly that at times there seemed no advance at all, the fact remained that there was unusual hopefulness even among agriculturists. Nor was this hopefulness of prospect belied: when it came to be looked back upon, 1899 could be chronicled as an *annus mirabilis* in trade—the best year for a quarter of a century. None the less a certain uneasiness among business men was making itself felt at this time in fundamental criticisms. Whence, it was asked, was the money being drawn that was pouring into the expansion of factories and engineering shops? Part of it could, no doubt, be traced to the growth of the new banking system—the amalgamation of small banks into huge concerns.[1] For one effect of this process had been the establishment of an immense number of branch banks in places too small for the old private banks to have been able to support branches in them, and these drew in numerous small sums which in old days would have remained outside the banking system, and so could not have been utilised as they were being utilised now. But though much loan capital might be traced in this way, a feeling was prevalent that English trade was depending too largely on foreign financing and on

[1] Vol. i., page 264.

borrowing from America. Of the great firms of financiers —Rothschilds, Raphaels, Morgans, Speyers, Seligmanns, Hambro—none were English ; and though this of course did not imply that all the money they handled was foreign money, it did suggest that English industry must be uncertain where its foundations were laid.[1] Another cause for uneasiness was found in the fact that in our foreign trade the excess of imports over exports was heavy, and the discrepancy was taken by some persons to mean that the national prosperity was unreal as long as hostile tariffs prevented our exchanging an exactly equal quantity of exports for the imports we consumed. Mr Chamberlain was tentatively approaching this position in January 1899, though, as *The Times* noted, he "judiciously abstained from offering many figures to a popular audience."[2] Sir Robert Giffen, upon the other hand, was pointing out that our position as the Free Trade nation constituted us "the bankers of the world," and that our "invisible exports" under that head were a genuine item of prosperity. Yet a third, and a grave, source of uneasiness was found in the nature of the company promoting which in a period of such excellent trade was naturally enough active. The crashing downfall of the cycle boom still reverberated in the City. The Company Laws, so often called in question of late, were again being criticised. It was, for instance, felt to be a mistake that, while all private traders in bankruptcy had to undergo public examination, the director of a company could, according to the Act of 1890, only be compelled to submit to such examination if the Official Receiver saw reason to suspect actual fraud. Twice at least in the course of the year the business community had striking support given to its uneasiness. In February the chairman of the Millwall Docks absconded, and he

[1] See an article, "Trade in 1898," in *The Nineteenth Century*, May 1899.

[2] 19th January 1899.

was found to have been falsifying the company's books in order to keep up the dividends out of capital. He was arrested later and sent to prison. Then in November when, according to custom, the new Lord Mayor of London presented himself at the Law Courts, to receive from the Lord Chief Justice the Crown's acquiescence in his election, the City had to listen to a direct reproof. The incoming Lord Mayor, Mr Newton, had been a director of a concern, named the Industrial Contract Corporation, which had just been wound up and, though Mr Newton was himself exonerated from the blame which was being attached to the undertakings of the company, the opportunity was taken by the Lord Chief Justice to substitute for the usual formalities a rather sharp speech about the too easy-going acceptance of company directorships. The feeling remained widespread that, in spite of many recent revelations of the evil wrought by "guinea-pig" directors, money worship being much in the ascendant, important persons continued, in consideration of directors' fees, to lend their names far too readily. Sharp as the Lord Chief Justice's words were, and unusual as it was to travel outside formalities on such an occasion, public opinion fully approved of his action.

Finally these various misgivings were focussed and brought to a head in an alarm as to a general "lack of efficiency" in trade theories and practice. It became known in May that a large contract for a railway bridge across the Atbara River, carrying the Nile railway up to Omdurman, had been given to an American firm. The outcry was immediate; England had paid for the reconquest of the Soudan; was she not to expect that openings for commercial enterprise there should put money into her pocket? This claim was replied to in that business-like spirit England had so much admired in Lord Kitchener's Egyptian campaign: American firms had guaranteed the work's completion in a shorter time and with

more certainty than English firms, and promptness was here a quality not to be dispensed with. National heart-searchings followed this plain speaking. Manufacturers, however, refused to accept the chief blame, even if it were to be proved that English methods and training were falling behindhand. Trade Unionism in England, they pleaded, formed an element of possible delay, with which other countries had not to contend in similar measure; while strikes were frequent, delivery at a given date could not be absolutely guaranteed.

Just at this time, as it happened, there were no serious strikes. The only one of any magnitude in 1899 was a strike of operative plasterers; they demanded that all foremen should be members of the union. In some directions, indeed, the tide of labour agitation which had risen high in the late eighties and early nineties seemed to be receding. Many small unions were losing ground; even the Dockers' Union was regarded as not very robust; the Agricultural Labourers' Union, on which in an earlier day much energy had been expended, had weakened as much as 90 per cent. in membership since 1892. Great unions, such as those of the miners, the engineers, the cotton and woollen operatives, were flourishing; but the net conclusion of the Board of Trade Report on Trade Unionism this year was that only 21 per cent. of working men were members of unions, and of working women only 12 per cent. Possibly a sense of the weakness of small unions, and their consequent danger to the movement, may have dictated a scheme propounded by the Trade Union Congress in January for a national federation of unions. The federated bodies were to subscribe to the federation one or two shillings per member per year, and to be entitled in return to an allowance of half-a-crown or five shillings per member per week during a strike or a lock-out. The "General Strike" began to loom in the minds of nervous persons who read of this scheme. But

such an idea had not much actuality, the likelihood of complete federation even was open to a good deal of doubt. When the South Wales miners, for instance, were ready to come into the Miners' Federation the officials of the latter body thought they detected a mercenary spirit in the South Wales men, a desire mainly to dip into the funds of the larger organisation. It seemed possible at least that similar suspicions in other large unions might handicap federation. Yet if a general strike were hardly a serious danger, uneasiness in regard to sectional strikes remained active. The question as to some form of statutory obligation was continually in the air, and the provisions for compulsory labour arbitration in New Zealand were much discussed—too much, in the opinion of people who considered that Colonial experiments could have little meaning for England.[1] Many persons, too, held that compulsory arbitration was an idle phrase, for trade unions were not entities as employers were; they could not be compelled. "Organisation of capital," it was said, "is the industrial remedy for strikes, and incorporation of the unions the legislative one."[2]

These misgivings as to methods and organisation, so soon to be felt in other departments of national life, were for the moment confined almost entirely to persons of commercial importance. As yet the man in the street felt nothing but a sense of prosperity; the nation at large was inclined to swagger; widespread interest taken in the lamentable condition of the Liberal party was chiefly due to a conviction that by its distrust of the growing spirit of Imperialism it had merited disaster. Mr Chamberlain was asserting that 1898 had marked the end of the epoch of the Manchester School: "We are all Imperialists now. We realise, but do not flinch from, the responsibilities and the

[1] See, for instance, a letter by the Bishop of Hereford in *The Times*, 4th January 1899.

[2] *The Times*, 10th January 1899.

obligations which Imperialism brings." [1] A change too was taking place in England's relation to other European powers, though it was attributed rather to an awakening of national spirit than to any specific event.[2] The new temper was such that Lord Salisbury's handling of the Fashoda incident [3] was felt to have strengthened his hold on popularity to a degree which minimised any chances Liberals might have had of returning to power. The great trade prosperity was everywhere affecting the public mind. The standard of wealth—of acquisition and of expenditure —had leaped up. Not everyone could be a millionaire created by Kimberley or the Rand ; but almost anyone might at the moment become abnormally rich, provided he were astute enough at company promotion. The Colossus was the popular idol, whether he took the shape of Mr Rhodes, with his hold on De Beers, of Mr J. B. Robinson with his deep leads paying him 100 per cent., of Mr Carnegie with his entrenched giant of steel production at Pittsburg, of Mr Rockefeller with his thumb on every little oil shop, or of Mr Pierpont Morgan with his Brobdingnagian pocket always in the place to catch a toppling American railroad. For the new standard of possessions the old standard of expenditure did not suffice. Already in London " smart " entertaining was having recourse to hotels. A dinner-party in a glittering restaurant, filled with people, and backed by a kitchen and cellars of which the range was naturally wider, while the quality was not poorer, than that of great houses, was more amusing than the best that could be done privately. Also the newly rich, of whom there were many, felt themselves safer in the hands of a *maitre d'hotel*.[4] The season in London was being

[1] Speech at Birmingham, 28th January 1899.

[2] *The Times*, leading article, 4th February 1899.

[3] Vol. i., page 442.

[4] *The Times*, in an interesting comment on this change (25th September 1899) remarked that, as the club had originally grown out of the tavern, so now the great hotel seemed becoming a new kind of club.

broken up by the " week-end " habit. Families no longer moved their complete establishments to town ; they kept two or three houses open. The expense of great week-end parties was made nothing of. Autumn shooting-parties had the expectation of being provided with day after day of driven pheasants and bags running into four figures. Whist was giving place to bridge ; and the much greater gambling possibilities in bridge violently accelerated changing manners and customs.[1]

It was, perhaps, in its effects upon women that the changed spirit in society became most rapidly marked. In the recklessly lavish periods of earlier times, such as the later eighteenth century, men had on the whole had the monopoly of extravagance. Theirs were the clubs and the gaming-tables ; theirs, quite as much as their women's, was costliness in apparel and jewellery. Now greater wealth sufficed for equal extravagance in women and men. In one sense, women's clubs were not a novelty. The Alexandra had been founded in 1884. It had been followed in 1887 by the Ladies' University Club, in 1892 by the Pioneers' Club (though these two, with the Sesame, opened in 1895, embraced rather women in professional life than in society), in 1894 by the Green Park Club, in 1896 by the Grosvenor, and by the Empress in 1897. By 1898 the ladies' clubs in London had reached the number of twenty-eight.[2] Bridge owed its absorbing popularity largely to the extent to which women devoted themselves to it ; stories began to be told of play which recalled the wildest days at Crockford's, when men sat at card-tables for twenty-four hours at a stretch. In another point also eighteenth-century custom was returning ; powder and

[1] This change was particularly noted at the time, because of the death, on 17th February, of Henry Jones, the famous "Cavendish" of whist manuals.

[2] See an article by Mrs Anstruther in *The Nineteenth Century*, April 1899.

paint were no longer only being employed to hide the marks of age; they were being used again by young women. The "advanced woman," too, who had been making her way for years past, mustered in force in London this summer for an International Congress of Women. At this many discussions took place, on political subjects, such as woman suffrage, and women's work in local government; on technical training for women; the ethics of expenditure; equal wages for women doing the same work as men; an equal moral standard for the sexes; women's clubs, women in science (Mrs Ayrton had just been reading a paper on the Electric Arc before the Institute of Electrical Engineers); and on a number of questions of domestic economy. But the congress was not a marked success. It was felt to have produced a welter of papers and discussions without much relation to one another or to central principles.[1] A more ephemeral phase of advanced views challenged public opinion this year in the Harberton case. Lady Harberton, who had been a consistent champion of "rational dress" for women, brought an action against the landlady at the Hautboy Inn, at Ockham, for having refused her admission to the inn coffee-room. The object was to raise the question whether a knickerbocker costume could rightly be considered as unsuitable for women. The law, however, ingeniously avoided giving a judgment on this matter. The only ground, it said, for action would have been refusal of reasonable accommodation and refreshment. The landlady of the Hautboy had not been guilty of such a refusal, and her right to serve the refreshment in a comfortable room other than the coffee-room was upheld. The case never commanded more than a passing interest.

The exaggerated standard of expenditure among the well-born and the rich had its full middle-class counterpart in the determination to "have a good time." All kinds of

[1] See an article by Miss Frances Low in *The Nineteenth Century*, August 1899.

sports seemed to be taking new and lively turns. Horse-racing was stirred by the arrival of Tod Sloan and the "American seat," with the saddle placed far forward, stirrups shortened to give a crouching attitude on the withers, and the reins gripped on either side of the horse's neck. Like most American inventions it was thoroughly suited to its purpose: the jockey's weight was thrown where it was most easily carried and the retardation caused by air pressure on the jockey's body was reduced to a minimum; Sloan almost lay on the horse's neck. There was scoffing at first; Englishmen are not prone to think they can learn about sport from other nations. But the reasonableness of the new seat, combined with Sloan's constant successes, soon caused his attitude to be copied, and within a year or two the older manner had disappeared from racecourses. The authorities had other reasons too for welcoming Sloan. He rode hard all the way; so his success was likely to break down the growing tendency towards *finesse* in racing, nursing horses—"messing them about" was the uncompromising phrase used by a steward of the Jockey Club—in order to bring them up with a run at the finish.[1] Cycling as a sport had been unaffected by the downfall of the cycle company boom. It was still very popular, and the names of crack racing cyclists were almost as well known as the names of jockeys. A new invention had been made—the free-wheel—and people were as wishful to ride the latest types of bicycle as they became a few years later to possess the most up-to-date motor car; a machine two or three years old was a thing no self-respecting cyclist cared to ride. Fresh ideas too were inspiring cricket. An unusually fine and dry summer had favoured batsmen, and huge scores had been made. They resulted in a discussion of the almost too great perfection of the modern cricket pitch; either, it was contended,

[1] See a letter by Lord Durham on American jockeys in *The Times*, 24th October 1900.

bats should be smaller or wickets should be broader. Other cricketers debated the rules for "following on." Golf was by this time so widespread that the perpetual opening of new links almost ceased to be noticed—it was now hardly possible for a watering-place to survive without a golf-course. Boat-racing was enlivened by the breaking down at last of the long series of Oxford successes. In 1899 a Cambridge crew, stroked by Mr Gibbon, and including Mr Dudley Ward and Mr R. B. Etherington Smith, turned the luck, and won a most popular victory. In athletic contests the interest of the year was a meeting between a combined team from Harvard and Yale and a similarly constituted team from Oxford and Cambridge. An entirely new sport was making its appearance in England—Ju-jitsu, a Japanese form of wrestling, in which scientific knowledge of bones and muscles was used to devise "holds" and "locks" of a kind that converted an attacker's energy to his own destruction. In football professional contests were taking on almost the nature of gladiatorial displays. The methods of the northern manufacturing towns, where football teams were maintained by a limited liability company which made dividends out of the "gates" at matches were being imitated in the south. London suburbs and southern provincial towns possessed their professional teams, and rivalry was fierce enough at times to make the referee's post a dangerous one. Late in the year a new spirit invaded even yacht-racing—a sport in which the populace hitherto had had no portion. A challenge for the America Cup was made by Sir Thomas Lipton. This became instantly a popular affair; the ordinary man was prepared by Lipton's shops and Lipton's advertisements to accept him as the purveyor of yacht-racing. The designers set to work at contriving a "skimming-dish" vessel which should allow of sufficient temporary strengthening to be enabled to cross the Atlantic. It was believed that the necessity imposed on the challenger for

the cup of sailing across to the contest accounted for previous British defeats; a racing yacht built on the spot could be made so much more lightly, and so much further from the "cruiser" form. The building of Sir Thomas Lipton's *Shamrock* was followed with keen public interest; and when at last she had crossed to America, and the races began, newspaper enterprise bolstered the excitement. Differences in time caused the races to be sailed when it was evening this side the Atlantic. The ingenuity of *The Daily Mail* arranged that the respective positions of the yachts during the race should be signified by red and blue lamps hoisted against a tower on the south side of the Thames. Other newspaper proprietors followed with modifications of the idea; and so while the races were taking place the Thames Embankment was blocked every evening with crowds seeing the newest galanty show. The *Shamrock* fared better than some earlier challengers had done; but the light airs of the American seaboard in autumn—the first race was not finished within the time limit—baffled her, and ultimately she was beaten. But this was not till late in October, and by that time sterner events had distracted the popular mind.

The affair at the time appeared to many persons, not hopelessly old-fashioned, as chiefly a proof of the menace of advertisement methods. They were shocked to see even *The Times* being invaded by stridency; its pushing of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* was one of the jokes of the year. Illuminated sky-signs blinking from street corners and shop fronts were denounced as dangerous to horses as well as offensive to humanity. Yet all such enterprise was part of a general liveliness which, though it might show want of ballast, was hardly likely to be checked by staid protestations. *The Belle of New York*, *Florodora*, and *San Toy* were the successes of the theatres; they were cheerful, irresponsible musical comedies lavishly staged. *The Gay Lord Quex*, *The Ambassador* and *The Canary*, all

of them light comedies, were the dramatic events of the year. The catchword of the streets, "Let 'em all come," expressed the vague swagger which everywhere was the mode. The public was agape for sensation; readily gullible, but quick to forgive in a burst of laughter when an imposture it had found entertaining was exposed. A man named De Rougemont had come to London with astonishing tales of adventure in the north of Australia. He had lectured to huge audiences, and then on the first touch of investigation his whole tale collapsed like a bubble. The public laughed, enjoying the idea of the impudence of the fraud as much as it had enjoyed the wonders of the lecturer. It enjoyed enormously too the situation created on the death of Earl Poulett, when a man who for years had been grinding a barrel organ in London put in his claim as heir to the Poulett estates and the gates of the family mansion in Somersetshire were barricaded against him.

In another section of the public the general extravagance and irresponsibility were producing a reactionary pose. "Back to the land" was hardly yet a catchword; but individuals were retiring to the country and writing to the Press of the joys of small holdings. Cycling had led to a rediscovery of the country, and persons who prided themselves on their sensibility were talking of the Simple Life. Similarly, the more frivolous the normal stage became, the more strenuous became the devotees of ethical drama. The Independent Theatre had come to an end; but in the autumn of 1899 some of its disciples, combining with new forces, founded the Stage Society. Its object was to produce English plays which the commercial stage would not take up, and also translations of leading foreign plays. It opened its career with Mr Bernard Shaw's *You Never Can Tell* and followed that with plays by Mr Sidney Olivier, Ibsen, Fiona Macleod, Maeterlinck, and Hauptmann. The society had its performances on Sundays in

order to secure the services of actors and actresses engaged every other night of the week. The pleasure of finding an occupation for Sunday evenings in London brought many members to the society.

In literature new names were coming to the front. Mr W. B. Yeats and Mr Stephen Phillips (whose *Paolo and Francesca* was published late in the year) gave new hopes for poetry; Mr Maurice Hewlett and Miss Fowler were the new-comers to the novel reader. An extraordinary revelation of the position Mr Rudyard Kipling had made for himself occurred when news was published at the end of February that he was gravely ill of pneumonia in New York. For a week bulletins about him were the most important items in the newspapers; and when, on the announcement that he was out of danger, the German Emperor sent Mrs Kipling a telegram of congratulation and appreciation of her husband's work, there was no incongruity in the action; for the English and American nations had been awaiting the moment of relief. Mr Kipling's only publication this year, beyond the poem, *The White Man's Burden*, addressed to the United States on its responsibilities in the Philippines, and a poem later in connection with the menace of the Boer War, was his school story, *Stalky and Co.* It caused the first slackening of his popularity; exactly the men who had most admired his "plain tales" of distant parts of the Empire disliked this plain tale of a public schoolboy's life; it was so far from the convention that Waterloos are won on the playing fields of Eton.

In the region of science much new life was stirring. Wireless telegraphy, exciting glimpses of which had been obtained from time to time in the past two years, came now to a public and practical success. In March the first wireless Press message was sent by Marconi instruments across the English Channel from Wimereux to the South Foreland. In July the system was utilised for the first

time at sea; during the naval manœuvres a cruiser scouting ten or twenty miles ahead of the fleet was kept in communication with the admiral in command. Attention was turned to the steady and devoted experiments being made in flying, by the death of Mr P. S. Pilcher on 30th September. He and Lilienthal, who had been killed three years earlier, lost their lives in the very necessary work of applying theories about the behaviour of plane surfaces in air which were slowly altering the whole line of advance of aeronautical science. The belief that flight was impracticable without a lifting agent lighter than air was still strong; but breaches were being made in it. Engineers had a new subject of interest in the turbine motor, the invention of the Hon. C. A. Parsons, which was a completely new application of steam propulsion. Instead of introducing the steam into cylinders, where it acted on pistons, which in their turn transmitted the energy by cranks to the propeller shaft, Mr Parsons set steam to act directly upon the shaft. He was able to transfer the triple-expansion principle from the reciprocating engine to his turbine engine.

The most notable step in medical science was Major Ross's announcement in August that he had definitely established the fact of transmission of malaria by mosquitoes in tropical Africa. The enlargement of our responsibilities in Africa, made lately more urgent by the taking over of Uganda and Nigeria from the chartered companies, had created a new necessity for the study of tropical disease. Major Ross's discovery, followed as it was by the corollary that mosquitoes could be destroyed by treating the water where they bred with kerosene, rendered malaria no longer an inevitable accompaniment of tropical life. At the same time in England great interest was being taken in the open air cure for consumption. Here again a disease had been considered incurable by the public at large, if not by the medical

profession, until the publication of Dr Koch's theories, and the heated discussion of them, made people begin to conceive of consumption as. like other diseases, due to bacteria. A great meeting was held at Marlborough House this year, with the Prince of Wales in the chair, to give new energy to research and to the discussion of methods of cure. The open air system at Nordrach, in Switzerland, was known; but it was not until this year that it began to be understood that the essentials of the system were a strict regimen and fresh air, not any particular forests or mountains.

Two important educational movements of 1898 have to be noted. One was the gift by Mr Passmore Edwards of a sum of money for building and equipping a London School of Economics. Here that new spirit we saw expressing itself first in the foundation of University Settlements[1] may be said to have reached its most fruitful form of expression. Political economy had undergone the discipline of a searching challenge from philanthropy; it now emerged as a social science—social economy—and in its new form received again that intellectual allegiance which twenty years earlier it had almost lost. The energy at the back of the London School of Economics was largely an energy of social reformers; but they could now reassert the intellectual method of attack upon social problems. The second educational movement has also a thread of connection with settlements. These had been founded partly to let the working man see the value of knowledge, and to enable him to distinguish between true and false kinds of knowledge. Now the working man began to have designs of his own upon university education. A project had been set on foot in Oxford by two Americans, Mr Beard and Mr Vrooman, to open a hall of residence there for working men. There was no proposal to give the men a full university course; few

[1] Vol. i., page 112.

working men could spare the necessary four years, and if they occasionally did, the result was rather to cut them off from their fellows than to fit them for other life. The idea here was that men should come into residence for a single year or so, to attend lectures chiefly in economics and modern history, and should then return to their work, not withdrawn from their class by education but taking a new feeling for education back into their class. The hope was that trade unions and their branches would pay the fees of some promising men, while some would maintain themselves by doing the household work of the hall. The hall, under the name of Ruskin Hall, was opened on 22nd February. The second movement was an even more important one for working-class education, though at the time, being less picturesque, it attracted less attention. A conference between representatives of the University Extension System and the Co-operative Societies was held in Oxford in August. This attempt to give more solidity to the work of extension lecturers, both by organising classes and discovering the kind of instruction most wanted, led a few years later to a wider interpretation of the place of university training than Ruskin Hall was able to achieve.

Towards the end of the year learned men were called upon to take part in a controversy which was raging at dinner-tables. Was 1899, or was it not, the last year of the century ? Were we, or were we not, now to surrender that which had been our mental and moral label, our epithet in respect to our ideals and our prejudices—the nineteenth century ? To half the nation it seemed obvious that if we had described all the years beginning with 18 as the nineteenth century, then when we began with the figures 19 we must be in the twentieth century. The other half of England pointed out forcibly that there had been no year 0 at the beginning of our era ; we had begun with the year 1 ; therefore the century would not

be complete till the passing of the year 100. It was so considerable a controversy that no less a person than the Astronomer Royal took a hand in it. He fixed the beginning of the twentieth century at 1st January 1901.

CHAPTER II

1899 CONTINUED: THE "UNHEALTHY CALM"

MR BALFOUR, in a speech delivered just before the opening of the session, deplored the "unhealthy calm" in political life. He was referring mainly, of course, to the fact that the Opposition was more concerned with internal disagreements than with attacking the Government, but he implied a certain slackness on the Government side. The complaint had some reason. A Queen's Speech, in which the chief legislative proposals were a Bill for setting up local municipalities to replace the vestries in London, a small Education Bill, and a Bill to assist workmen to purchase their homes, was a poor effort. A forecast of a session too in which disorders in the Church were specified as "the rock ahead" was not impressive. The deplored calm, however, was but superficial. The session was not six weeks old before debate on the Civil Service Vote became the occasion for discussing the policy of the Colonial Office in respect to the Transvaal. In April advanced Radicals were challenging the Government to give an explanation of a great increase of barrack accommodation in South Africa. By the middle of June a Blue Book of despatches which had passed between Mr Chamberlain and Sir Alfred Milner was published, and the tone of them left little doubt of the direction in which events were moving.

For whole-hearted Liberals to feel that they confronted these events with divided counsels, and a new leader, the choice of whom seemed merely opportunist, must have

been very depressing. Sir William Harcourt, in addressing his letter of resignation to Mr John Morley, had appeared to indicate his successor. But Mr Morley, knowing that his strong convictions against the policy that had been pursued in the Soudan, and was now being pursued in South Africa, must cut him off from many of the most prominent men on his side of the House, and might even divide them finally from the party, preferred to take refuge in the arduous task that had been imposed on him—the writing of Mr Gladstone's biography. Failing Mr Morley, it was taken for granted that the choice must fall on Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. As early as 5th January, Sir Charles Dilke was alluding to him as the probable leader, expressing at the same time his own distaste for the prospect by describing him as "in the whole trend of his mind one of the most Conservative members occupying a seat on the Liberal benches." [1] Mr Asquith was mentioned also; but he was known to prefer for the present to devote himself to his successful career at the Bar. A meeting at the National Liberal Club exposed the differences of opinion in full blast. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was ultimately chosen as leader in the Commons; but, as in the case of Sir William Harcourt,[2] the election was half-hearted; the choice of the leader of the party as a whole being left until there should be a prospect of the return of the Liberals to power. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was regarded generally as little more than a stopgap. He had no great reputation outside the House; and current opinion attributed his election to the fact that he had not been identified with either extreme among Liberals; that he was neither a Little Englander nor an active Imperialist, and might be expected to "sit on the fence, fully satisfying no section of his followers, but

[1] *The Times*, 6th January 1899.

[2] Vol. i., page 402.

at least vitally offending none." [1] In his first week of leadership, Sir Henry showed a vigour and acuteness that may well have startled the Ministerial benches. But it was only a brief success. It is doubtful whether even political genius could have won any continuous success in a session when the main interest of politics was one in which many of his prominent followers were more in sympathy with the Government than with their own leader. It was inadvisable to make even such attempts as the rules of the House admitted to bring to the front a subject which, while it was engrossing all thoughts, had no official existence. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had to flesh his sword in mock battles.

The " rock ahead " which had been so curiously looming at the opening of the session proved not very formidable. But there had been a revival of ecclesiastical controversy and an Anti-Ritualist Campaign, which had contrived to attract much attention. This was a good deal due to the tactics pursued by a small group of persons who, making themselves technically parishioners of certain London churches where High Church practices were in vogue, attended the services and interrupted them by loud protests. Such scenes had been occurring frequently since the beginning of 1898. It happened also that ecclesiastical law, as a highly controversial subject, interested two voluminous writers of letters to the newspapers—Lord Grimthorpe and Sir William Harcourt. Both were strong Erastians; and they filled columns with disquisitions on the law, the supineness of bishops, the instruments of Church discipline. The ceremonial oblation of incense, reservation of the Sacrament, and the use of the confessional were the practices most bitterly attacked; such services as the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday being made also occasions of protest. The English Church Union repudiated the authorities

[1] *The Times*, 17th January 1899.

to which Lord Grimthorpe and Sir William Harcourt appealed. The reply of extreme anti-ritualists was that in that case Parliament must intervene and erect new tribunals. This attitude wrecked the agitation in 1899. An anti-ritualist meeting at the Albert Hall just before the opening of the session was followed by a deputation to Mr Balfour as leader of the House of Commons, asking for legislation from the Government. Mr Balfour held out no hopes of this. A private member's Bill was therefore introduced. But it went to such lengths in proposing to pass over the authority of the bishops, and in scheduling as ecclesiastical offences practices which hitherto had not been regarded as illegal, even by men such as Sir John Kennaway and Sir William Harcourt, that it lost the support of moderate anti-ritualists, and was thrown out decisively. The bishops, meanwhile, continued the use of admonition; and in August the two archbishops, in a case brought before them, gave judgment against the ceremonial use of incense, and against the carrying of lights in processions.

This ecclesiastical controversy was believed to be adding fuel to the controversies on education which the Government's proposals aroused. The endowing of voluntary schools, it was said, became a different matter if the Church that had control of these schools might be accused of such lawlessness as to bring up English children in beliefs not essentially different from those of Roman Catholics. Mr Lloyd George was coming to the front on the Liberal benches largely by his effective presentation of these views. However, the Education Bill of this year was not highly controversial. It took the step, which had so long been advocated, of making the chief authority in education no longer a committee of council but a separate board. The Science and Art Department of South Kensington, as well as the Education

Office, was absorbed by the new board; and thus Technical and Secondary Education were united with Elementary Education in a single system. The Bill was criticised as being but a partial dealing with difficulties. The dual local authorities remained—School Boards and Voluntary School Committees—and Liberal opinion was in favour of placing the responsibility for local administration upon the county councils, working through committees. The idea prompting this suggestion was that the religious difficulty might be removed if elementary schools were administered by bodies in the main popularly elected. The Bill, however, met with no disaster and passed into law. Another measure that became law provided for the rating of the clergy of the Church of England on only half the Tithe Rent Charge of their benefices. There had been a certain unfairness in the rating of the clergy on account of the falling tithe returns due to the lowered price of corn. But this Bill, which authorised payment from the Local Taxation Account of the Exchequer of half the rates hitherto charged on the clergy, was another of those pieces of legislation by privilege to which this Ministry seemed prone. The London Government Bill, setting up local municipalities, also became law; it might be described as an application to the London County Council area of that principle of the subdivision of local government which had been effected in the counties by the Parish Councils Act. Though there was abundance of easy jesting about the petty mayors and aldermen that the Bill would create, the ending of the old vestries had been bound to follow sooner or later the ending of the old Board of Works. A Moneylenders Bill was introduced by Lord James of Hereford, but was not passed. For some time cases in the courts had brought the money-lending business into notoriety; there was strong support for a measure which should not only limit the interest on

a loan that was recoverable at law, but should do something towards preventing the network of aliases by which usurers, whose extortions under one name had been exposed, continued in activity under another. The case of Gordon *v.* Street in 1899 had raised this last point in a prominent manner.

One item contained in the Queen's Speech made but a poor appearance in Parliament—the Bill to enable local authorities to advance money to working men for the purchase of their homes. This was an old scheme of Mr Chamberlain's, an item in that middle-class conception of democratic reform [1] which had fallen so much out of date. The chief objections to the Bill were, firstly, that it would be impracticable to confine the loans to a particular class, and, secondly, that it was very doubtful wisdom for the working man to tie himself to a particular locality: anything making labour less mobile must tend to congestion in times of unemployment. It was a poor attempt to provide a sop for the Tory working-class voter. Mr Chamberlain himself was far too busy with other affairs to concern himself with this bantling of his, or to feel much solicitude about another idea of his which he would have been well advised to sustain. In July a majority of the committee presided over by Mr Henry Chaplin [2] reported in favour of a scheme of Old Age Pensions of five shillings a week, payable at sixty-five years of age. There was some taunting of Mr Chamberlain as months went by and the report drew no word from him. He could hardly, however, have foreseen the future, or have given a thought to the presence on the committee of a young member, Mr Lloyd George. The workmen's houses Bill was easier to produce. The Tory party was feeling also that it had provided much social reform without a corresponding adjustment of the legal position

[1] Vol. i., page 320.
[2] *Ibid.*

of labour, which in the ease of strikes was seeming to be privileged. The past twenty years had brought many Employers' Liability Acts ; there had been Housing Aets, and extensions of transit facilities financed from the rates. Quite lately there had been the Workmen's Compensation Act ; and masters of industry were grumbling a good deal at the addition of this to the Employers' Liability Acts on the Statute Book.

London was indeed rather less well provided in regard to eheap locomotion than the large provincial towns, with their far-reaching trams. Manchester, for instanee, had dealt with its housing problem almost entirely by facilitating and cheapening means of transit, and had done little in the way of building. This year there was a demand for enforcement of the powers of the Local Government Board to insist upon the provision of workmen's trains in London. Connected with this was a question which became of great moment. Active spirits in the London County Council were feeling more and more strongly that slum problems could only be solved, and the decent housing of the artisan achieved, by building far enough out of London for land to be bought at a reasonable price, and then providing cheap means of transit. Thereupon the question arose whether, under the Housing Act, the Council could buy land outside the area of its jurisdiction. Legal opinion held that it could not. Meanwhile all that it seemed possible to do within the area was being done, and not by the Council only. Before that body eame into existence, private benefaction had erected a number of large tenement buildings ; and within the past year or two a successful attempt had been made to house decently the more drifting and solitary kind of poor man who could not afford the most meagre flat. Lord Rowton, who in earlier years had been Lord Beaconsfield's private secretary and henchman, set himself to discover whether common lodging-houses,

run not for extortionate profit, but for a reasonable return, could not be contrived to provide these men with a comfortable shelter. In certain respects the tenement buildings erected by private benefactors showed what could be done. For example, the capital of the Guinness Trust had been originally £200,000, given by Lord Iveagh in 1889, and £25,000 added by the Goldsmiths' Company in 1893. In 1898 the net income, after allowing for depreciation and a contribution to the contingency fund, was £8600; and the capital fund had been enlarged by allotments out of income to £298,000.[1] Lord Rowton erected four lodging-houses in different parts of London, with beds and cubicles let at a charge no higher than that of the ordinary common lodging-house; and provided with large rooms in which the men could cook and eat their meals. His experiment proved that a man could live wholesomely in one of these houses for as little as 8s. 2d. a week.[2]

A subject which had begun to trouble the social conscience at a rather later date than that of housing—dangerous trades and unhealthy occupations—made some stir in 1899 on account of the reports of two Home Office committees, one on phosphorus poisoning in match-making, the other on lead poisoning in the manufacture of china. The first report was uncompromising in its assertion that phosphorus poisoning could be entirely prevented by insistence on precautions, such as mechanical dipping of matches in closed chambers. The great strides the social conscience had taken in the past twenty years may be noted in the general agreement that the enforcement of such rules was a necessity, in spite of the fact that it must involve the ruin of certain ill-equipped factories.

[1] See an article on "London Buildings" in *The Fortnightly Review*, 1899.

[2] See an article by a resident in Rowton House, *The Nineteenth Century*, September 1899.

The second report was rather less conclusive. It recorded a considerable increase in use of leadless glaze since 1893; for much ordinary ware dangerous glazes no longer were thought necessary. At the same time it was the contention of the china manufacturers that positive prohibition of the use of lead would be disastrous; imported china, it was said, would then compete ruinously with the home manufacture; and they pleaded that increasing precautions were eliminating danger to the workers. Beyond these two dangerous trades, in which sufferings had been particularly horrible, other occupations, the evils of which were more insidious—glass polishing, naphtha processes, quick-drying paint, etc.—were being inquired into. Phosphorus poisoning had been brought into public notice chiefly by *The Star* newspaper in pursuance of its avowed policy of giving some of its space to social pamphleteering.[1] It was active just now in another respect. Fires caused by oil lamps were frequent, and deaths due to them, when reckoned by a newspaper devoting itself to the subject, reached a serious total. It was thought that these accidents were due largely to the lowering of the safety standard for lamp-oil. The provisions, under which oil was not allowed to be imported and sold for ordinary lighting purposes, if it turned, in an open vessel, to explosive vapour at a temperature below 100°, had been altered in 1879, when the danger point was fixed at 73° in a closed vessel. Round these two figures controversy raged, many experts holding that the new test was by far the sounder; and that the cause of the increasing number of accidents should be looked for in the cheap glass lamps used by the poor. A private member's Bill proposing to restore the flash point to 100° was introduced this year; but it was defeated.

Labour, accepting these ameliorations and attempts at amelioration, did not acquiesce in the view that its

[1] Vol. i., page 240.

own attitude must be modified in response to them. In Parliament it had met with a serious rebuff at the general election of 1895 [1]; it was now preparing for the next election, which could not be far off, since this was the Government's fifth year of office. Labour men had their explanation of the parlous condition of the Liberal party. It had, they believed, had its day; it had solved the constitutional problems of the past generation, from which it had sprung, by extension of the franchise, establishment of the ballot, and such measures. Its "cry for a leader was really a cry for the departure of its soul." Reform now involved what the Liberal party had never been constituted to undertake. In face of socialism the differences between Tories and Liberals became "purely artificial." For in the view of the Independent Labour Party reform meant "such employment of the members of the state that each would have an opportunity of becoming an effective consumer" [2]; and the immediate corollaries of that belief were the taxation of ground values and ground rents, the readjustment of mining royalties towards making them public property as soon as practicable, the nationalisation of railways and canals, and, ultimately, nationalisation of all the means of production. However, the new policy of permeation, rather than of frontal attack upon property, which socialists for the past six years had adopted, made these sweeping manifestoes appear rather academic. At the conference of socialists and the Independent Labour Party in April the tone was not very combative. The foremost subject was technical education; there was also some discussion of unemployment, and of the idea of *ateliers nationaux*. Local government was still the main objective of socialists under the Fabian influence which had succeeded the Morris and Hyndman

[1] Vol. i., page 372.

[2] Articles by Mr Keir Hardie and Mr Ramsay Macdonald on "The I.L.P. Programme," *Nineteenth Century*, January 1899.

influence.[1] For instance, Fabianism was at work in a proposal made by the committee of the London School Board that the feeding of necessitous children should no longer be left to private enterprise, but should be undertaken, as part of its routine, by the board. The proposal was rejected. A growing opposition to extensions of municipal trading was due to knowledge that this was a chosen line of socialist advance. A movement for the establishment of a joint committee of the two Houses of Parliament in order to consider the limiting of municipal trading was, during the session, receiving the support of the London and other Chambers of Commerce. Municipalities at the moment had been forced into an unfortunate position. A scheme had been propounded, in a private Bill, for generation of electricity, in bulk, at the pit's mouth, thereby saving the cost of transport of coal. The Association of Municipal Corporations had opposed the scheme. It hardly could have done otherwise; the municipalities had so lately spent vast sums on electrical equipment and had not had time as yet to show an adequate return on the ratepayers' money. None the less the opposition was easily representable as an insistence on monopoly at the cost of national progression.

Two problems of London administration were discussed during the session. One was the question of the water supply. The London County Council again promoted a Bill for obtaining water from the Welsh hills. But at this time the Royal Commission which had been appointed to consider the subject reported in favour of a system of intercommunication between areas served by the different companies, to be enforced, if necessary, by the Local Government Board. This intercommunication was already begun,[2] and the Royal Commission's report coincided with the common-sense view that there was

[1] Vol. i., pages 156 and 335.
[2] *Ibid.* page 400.

in fact no lack of water, and no need to go to the huge expense of the County Council project, if unification of the existing supplies were obtained. Moreover, recent investigations had thoroughly re-established the healthiness and purity of the reservoir principle, and quashed the half-sentimental ideas in regard to " water from the hills." The other London question was the congestion of traffic in the streets. Busy men were grumbling loudly at their loss of time ; and the Home Secretary introduced a Bill giving the police authorities additional powers to make orders controlling the traffic, to regulate routes of omnibuses and their stopping places, and other such matters. There had been a good deal of complaint of the empty cabs moving slowly along the edges of roadways ; the police authorities now forbade cabs to " crawl " for hire in the Strand, Piccadilly or Bond Street. This was felt to be rather hard on the cabmen ; and many people considered the first attack should have been on tradesmen's vans, which obstructed traffic not only by their slow movement, but by standing against the kerb, loading and unloading, in crowded thoroughfares.

Another traffic problem so much discussed this year that it extinguished the usual " silly season " topics was the amalgamation of the South Eastern and London, Chatham & Dover railways. Both lines had long been attacked for their slowness, unpunctuality, and the dinginess of their rolling stock. The large northern railways had familiarised the public with corridor carriages, dining-cars, and comfort, even for third-class passengers. Amalgamation of the two lines, abolishing competition between them, might, it was feared, end all prospect of their improvement. Healthiness of competition formed the chief text of the discussion that ensued. Consequently a particular degree of welcome was given to a new railway venture, when the extension of the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway's system to London was opened, in March, and

the name of it was changed to the Great Central Railway.

An event of considerable importance was the publication, after three years' work, of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Licensing Laws.[1] Yet it was not of the importance it might have been, for two reasons. The first was that the outbreak of the Boer War pushed all home legislation into the background, and for several years there was no chance of forcing the Government to attempt legislation which was certain to be highly controversial. The second reason was that the report was far from unanimous—the chairman himself did not sign it. There were in fact two quite distinct reports. Hopes that had relied on the unusual composition of the commission had not been justified. In appointing eight members of the licensed victualling trade, eight temperance reformers, and eight neutral men, the Government had clearly hoped for some report embodying a working compromise between extremes of opinion. Conservatives had had two or three uncomfortable experiences of producing licensing questions for debate in Parliament[2]; they no doubt hoped that in this case some of the sharpness of debate might have been got over in the privacy of the sittings of the commission, and that the next attempt at legislation (some attempt inevitably lay ahead of them, under pressure of that Church opinion they could not afford to alienate) might be upon the basis of an agreed compromise. Such hopes were shattered. In April it began to be known that there was a serious division among members of the commission; then followed the announcement that Lord Peel had resigned his chairmanship, because his draft report had not been accepted; and there ensued a most unseemly amount of bickering as to whether Lord Peel had or had not tried to be high-handed, as to whether

[1] Vol. i., page 396.

[2] *Ibid.* pages 230 and 270.

certain of his colleagues had pursued purely destructive tactics in discussing the draft report; and so on. What had actually taken place was of the greatest encouragement to temperance reformers, even though it had split the commission. Lord Peel, who had entered upon his task in the most neutral frame of mind, had been converted by the evidence he had heard to becoming an ardent advocate of the return, at the earliest possible moment, to the outright annual conditions of licences—to re-endowing licensing authorities, after a certain number of years' notice, with the power to refuse renewal without any question of compensation. "It has come," he said, in his report, "to be a struggle for mastery between the State and the trade. . . . Who is to be master?" He took the view that, by a certain carelessness, the State had allowed the purely annual character of a licence to lapse; therefore it would not be just to refuse to recognise that the State had become responsible for a reasonable expectation of renewal; but all that was necessary was to let the trade have notice that after a certain term of years the State would resume complete possession, so to speak, of all licences; the trade in the interim would make its own arrangements with regard to the new conditions. Such was the fundamental cause of disagreement in the commission. Members might wrangle afterwards as to whether a unanimous report on certain lines would not have been possible, if Lord Peel had shown willingness to modify his draft. It was contended, for instance, that there might have been a report recommending (1) the creation of a new licensing authority, on which county councillors would serve with justices of the peace; (2) the creation of a new Appeal Court in the place of Quarter Sessions, the new court to be not open to county justices, and therefore to be above the reach of canvassing from either side; (3) a reduction of Sunday hours, and of the privileges of *bona-fide* travellers, also restrictions as to serving liquor

to children; (4) prohibition under penalties for serving persons known to be inebriates; (5) the placing of pre-1869 beer-houses under the ordinary licensing authority. But it was not, after all, more than speculation that these recommendations would have been adopted unanimously. Almost certainly, even to gain these so desirable reforms, temperance members of the commission would have felt that their price, in relinquishing the policy of systematic reduction of licences, was too heavy. At any rate the commission did divide irretrievably. A majority of the members—for Lord Peel failed to carry the neutral members with him—continued to meet under the vice-chairman, Sir Algernon West, and drew up their report. Lord Peel and the temperance members signed a Minority Report.

Though for the time being the subject of the Licensing Laws was thrust into the background, it became finally so vital a matter of political controversy, and did so much to invigorate Liberalism for its revival in 1906, that no apology is needed for giving space to it here. As it is, however, impracticable to set out the two Reports in full, we may consider the main points of agreement, and of difference, between them.

1. They agreed in the opinion that there were "congested areas" in licensing, and that a large reduction of licences was necessary. But whereas this was more or less of a "pious opinion" in the Majority Report, Lord Peel's Report gave it reality by expressing further the view that there was proved connection between the number of licences in a district and the number of convictions for drunkenness. From this Lord Peel deduced the opinion that a fixed proportion of licences to population was a practicable ideal; and he recommended that the licensing authorities should be compelled to reduce, within seven years, the number of licences to that proportion.

2. The reports may be said in one sense to have agreed

that compensation should be paid for licences extinguished on grounds other than those of misconduct; but they differed as to whether such compensation should only be payable for a limited term of years. Much controversy later will be unintelligible unless it is made clear that the difference upon this last point went deeper than appeared. The Majority Report regarded compensation as payment for the State's destruction of a valuable interest. The Minority Report did not acknowledge the principle of compensation in that sense at all. It recommended that notice should be given to the trade that in seven years' time the State would resume its power of granting strictly single-year licences; but for licences extinguished before the close of that period a sum of money would be paid *as commutation of notice*, not as compensation for an interest. That is, while admitting that expectation of renewal had been allowed to grow up, it was not admitted as being beyond the power of the State to put an end to that expectation.

3. The Reports agreed that grocers' licences should be brought under the licensing authorities. Lord Peel's report went on to demand that grocers should keep separate premises for the sale of intoxicating liquors, and should not sell them in the ordinary course of their trade.

4. The reports agreed upon a need for the reduction of Sunday hours of opening. Lord Peel's report recommended a system of local veto, whereby a district might establish complete Sunday closing.

We saw in the last chapter that in trade the years 1898 and 1899 were prosperous beyond all precedent. National finance, however, was in a less rosy condition. All the wealth of the country did not prevent the nation's having a deficit; and it was natural that there should be searching criticism of a system of taxation which did not bring to the Exchequer the prosperity of the community. Something was felt to be amiss with the income-tax. An extra penny

on this tax now brought in £2,150,000, and twenty years earlier it had brought in £1,900,000.[1] The increase was ridiculously petty in face of the immense growth in private incomes; and the cause was found in that extension of abatements which had accompanied rises in the income-tax, and had been especially associated with the Death Duties Budget. The "black-coated" class—the clerk class—was increasing, and this was the part of the community chiefly benefiting from the exemption of small incomes, while it contributed less to the Exchequer in duties on liquor and tobacco than did the artisan. Direct taxation seemed to be falling on a smaller portion of the public. Would it not be possible to increase indirect taxation by returning to the rather wider basis of customs dues of thirty years earlier, when the free trade principle was not questioned, and yet the tariff had a more extensive range? Meanwhile all sorts of proposals were being made to the Chancellor of the Exchequer; he might, it was suggested, tax bicycles, steam launches, flash signs, advertisement posters, cats, silk hats, bachelors, matches, revolvers, photographic cameras. But none of these proposals found a place in the Budget. The problem was no passing one; it was only too clear that national expenditure was increasing, and was bound to increase. The Navy Estimates for 1899 were three millions higher than in 1898, and they were not at all likely to decrease. For just at this time the German Emperor was appealing to his people in order to make heavy increases in his navy, and thus a new element was added to that rivalry which hitherto had turned chiefly on the size of the French and Russian fleets.[2] In respect to these there was no relaxation of rivalry. Our relations with France were of the worst; the year 1899 made famous the phrase "a policy of pin-pricks." That was the policy we believed France engaged

[1] *The Times*, 27th February 1899.

[2] Vol. i., page 351.

in—a policy of petty irritations of England. Thus when France was pressing the Chinese Government for concessions at Shanghai, her action was regarded as almost hostile; and, though the concessions were refused, disagreements concerning the Newfoundland fisheries and French control of Madagascar provided sources of continuous friction. Jingoism, gratified by the course of the Fashoda incident in 1898,[1] regarded every move made by France as a provocation. It was not slow, either, to take the opportunity for hectoring comment provided by the Dreyfus case, which still was continuing. The Cour de Cassation in June annulled the original trial, and ordered another trial to be held at Rennes. The military and Anti-Semite party was so strong that when the prisoner returned to France in July he was landed at an obscure port in Brittany; and the train in which he was conveyed was stopped some distance from Rennes, and his journey completed by road. The second trial ended early in September in a second verdict of guilty, and a sentence of ten years' imprisonment. English comment was bitterly hostile; nor was it assuaged by the release of Dreyfus a fortnight later, on pardon; or by the comical twist Anti-Semitism assumed when a prominent Anti-Semite, M. Guérin, defied arrest in his house in Paris and sustained a thirty-seven days' siege. Throughout the year the tone of English comment upon French affairs must have been highly irritating to France; and there could not but have been ironical surprise in that country when, towards the end of the year, being involved ourselves in an undertaking not at the moment flattering our susceptibilities, we gravely complained of an outbreak of "Anglophobia" in France.

Altogether there hardly could have been a more unfortunate year for the meeting of a conference the Tsar of Russia had convened to discuss an international agree-

[1] Vol. i., page 441.

ment for the limitation of armaments. Not only was international temper at its best uncertain, and at its worst inflamed, but commercial rivalry was increasing; the "open door" of trade had been forced by Japan in China, and seemed to require forcing elsewhere.[1] Every nation too had its pet invention in warlike machinery: France was experimenting busily with submarine boats; Germany with war balloons; England with new explosives. Would any nation consent to stay its hand? But unfavourable as the time was, the conference met, and not entirely in vain. True, the main proposal, that for the limitation of armaments, disappeared. But certain conventions of war were established by Declarations, and some proposals in the imperfect state of *Vœux*—which may be translated humane aspirations—formally endorsed by the conference. The three Declarations prohibited (*a*) the throwing of projectiles or explosives from balloons, for a period of five years; (*b*) the use of projectiles which had for sole object diffusion of asphyxiating gases; (*c*) the use of bullets which expanded or flattened on impact. Great Britain, it must be mentioned, declined to sign the last declaration, on the ground that in her dealings with savages she could not afford to restrict herself to bullets which did not stop the onrush of an enemy; but she undertook not to employ expanding bullets against civilised opponents. The conference achieved also the formal setting up of an International Arbitration Tribunal with a rota of judges.

The conference broke up at the end of July. A lurid light on the horizon confronted its members even as they were leaving the scene of their labours.

[1] The Cobden Club this year issued a letter to its members urging that the Club should take more active interest in questions of foreign policy, as a legitimate extension of its work.

CHAPTER III

1899 CONTINUED: THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

TO the eyes of the general public in England the rupture with the Transvaal had three stages. The first was the arrival of the Uitlanders' petition etting forth the grievances of their position on the Rand, n April. The second was the conference between Sir Alfred Milner and President Kruger at Bloemfontein, in May. The third was the exchange of increasingly frigid despatches, in September. The process of gradual concentration of public interest may be traced in another way. Until June Transvaal affairs made but an occasional appearance in the leading columns of *The Times*; through une and July four or five leading articles a week, not dependent on any particular item of news, were devoted to he subject; on 7th July appeared the first announcement of military preparations; from the opening of August onwards the leading articles may be said to have appeared daily. The three stages may be noted in still another direction. The Uitlanders' petition was received in England with rather an uncertain voice; it could be spoken of as an open question whether Mr Chamberlain would, by presenting it to the Queen, identify himself with the grievances it expressed.[1] Moreover foreign opinion had not yet stiffened; leading French newspapers such as *Le Temps*, *Les Débats* and *Le Siècle*, though maintaining the suspicion, roused in 1896, that Mr Rhodes and Mr Chamberlain understood each other only too well, spoke of President Kruger as obstinate. The Bloemfontein

[1] *The Times*, 9th May 1899.

negotiations were regarded in a changed spirit; it would appear however that the greater part of the British nation regarded the negotiations as a defining of the issue in view of contingencies more or less remote. During the third stage, the exchange of despatches in September, no one had much doubt of what the next step would be—those who deeply deplored it, as well as those who welcomed or acquiesced in it, thought of it as beyond question then.

To what extent may the issue be said to have hung in the balance at all? On the one side was President Kruger, who had passed his long life in the irritated belief that it was England's ambition to rule the whole of South Africa, who had, because of England's error, been able to give a sinister aspect to the reversal of the Transvaal annexation,[1] and who of late years had been much under the influence of an adviser, in the person of Dr Leyds, Secretary of State, condemned by even the strongest English opponents of the war as "the evil genius of Transvaal politics."[2] On the other side, as British Colonial Secretary, was a business man, the best of whose life had been lived in a time when middle-class "progress" was a worshipped ideal, who believed the bonds of trade prosperity to be the real bonds of empire; a man whose energy always attached itself to action, an apostle of change, no less, though somewhat differently, as a Tory than he had been as a Liberal; and lastly, one whose feeling was Radical without being ethical.[3] The contest was not in reality between Tory Imperialist pride and a small State which within twenty years had waxed to a rival; that was only an element imported into the dispute. It was really between the older materialist Radical-

[1] Vol. i., page 69.

[2] J. A. Hobson, *The War in South Africa*, page 33.

[3] It was once remarked by a prominent Liberal that no ethical argument is to be found from first to last in Mr Chamberlain's speeches.

ism, now by certain economic changes [1] placed within the Tory fold, and Boer obscurantism. A confirmation of this may be found in the prominence given to the franchise question—the old battle-cry of the individualist Radicals. Mr Chamberlain was following his deepest instincts, and not the spirit of the party with which since 1886 he had been allied, when he made that question a catchword for the English populace.

When we have thus established the protagonists, we find ourselves, in discussing the progress of the negotiations, traversing ground the interest of which is hardly more than dialectical. President Kruger was convinced that England's mind had long been made up; consequently events could not be stayed by appeal to a Transvaal tribunal he dominated. Neither could they be checked in an English public exasperated by his attitude and temperament. None the less the course of events must be quickly gone over.

The Uitlanders' petition, which was handed to Mr Conyngham Green, British Resident at Pretoria, on 26th March 1899, set forth a considerable list of grievances. It began by pointing out that the Rand provided about seven-eighths of the revenue of the Transvaal, and that taxation of the gold industry had raised that revenue from £154,000 in 1886 to a sum approaching £4,000,000 in 1898; but that meanwhile the foreign residents, whose businesses provided this overwhelming proportion of the revenue, being without votes, had no voice in its expenditure. They were without part, therefore, in the appointment, payment or control of the officials in charge of affairs on the Rand. The second point was that the foreign population was badly treated in the matter of education, and, without votes, had no prospect of better facilities; the Uitlander schools—according to the petition—received only £650 out of the £63,000 allotted by the

[1] Vol. i., page 363.

Boer Government to education, and the average amount spent per child was stated to be 1s. 10d. on Uitlander children and £8, 6s. on Boer children. The next item was a demand for municipal government for Johannesburg; this was supported by charges of corruption and violence in the police force, and by instances of the backwardness of the authorities, as that no drainage system, and no water-supply except from perambulating carts, existed. After this came complaints of despotic laws controlling the Press and the rights of public meeting. Finally, there were accusations of the Boer Government's more or less corrupt oppression of the mining interests; the supply of dynamite, which was a necessity in the mines, was in the hands of a monopolist syndicate, and it was calculated that the mineowners paid £600,000 a year more than the market price for an inferior quality of dynamite; the liquor laws were said to be so ill administered that Kaffirs could obtain what was nominally forbidden to them; the State railways were complained of as extortionate and incompetently managed; concessions for the monopoly supply of ordinary articles of consumption could, it was said, be secured by bribery, the result being to keep the cost of living at an abnormal height.

The indictment was a formidable one. It acquired a force which practically swept away argument from the fact that, considered without relation to other circumstances, all the statements of the petition were true. In attempting to supply these statements with a background, it will be convenient to deal with them in reverse order.

Complaint of corrupt oppression of the mining industry may be narrowed down at once to the matter of the dynamite monopoly. The cost of the necessaries of life was already falling, the Netherlands Railway had reduced its charges by some £200,000 during 1898. Any ground of complaint that may still have existed, under these

heads, was comparatively insignificant. As to the dynamite, English Liberals replied that it was rather fallacious to talk of conditions of a free market when practically only one firm manufactured it in quantity. But that the retailing monopoly of it was a bad thing, founded in corruption, and casting more than a shadow of corruption on President Kruger himself, no one denied.

The complaint of despotic laws against the Press and against the right of public meeting was less genuine. The petitioners neglected to mention that neither law was unknown to the United Kingdom (the law concerning public meetings was practically identical with that enforced in Ireland), nor did they remember to mention that no action under either law had been taken till feeling was expressing itself in terms no government would have tolerated. Even then only one street meeting was suppressed, and although the editors of certain Johannesburg newspapers were arrested in September 1899, the publication of their papers was not suspended by the Boers.

The demand for municipal government for the Rand had had Mr Chamberlain's support in 1896; he had put it forward then as a means of settling the Uitlander question without the grant of the franchise.[1] The proposal need not be dwelt upon, because President Kruger would not have agreed to see a part of the Transvaal territory separately administered; he would have perceived even in municipal government the beginning of the same kind of severance which had already detached diamond-yielding Kimberley from the Orange Free State.

The franchise question wore, to the President's mind, a similar menace. If he gave a franchise on equal terms to the Rand, he gave a large share in the control of his country to foreigners who were of a kind likely by their activity, their greater familiarity with methods of

[1] Vol. i., page 389.

political agitation, and their greater facilities (owing to the density of their population) for combined action, practically to outweigh the Boer voice, even if, as yet, their numbers were smaller. In 1880 the qualification for the franchise had been singularly easy: it consisted merely of a year's residence. In 1885, after the Boers had obtained the Convention of London, the qualification was raised to five years' residence. This was the same as in Great Britain and the United States. Probably President Kruger was at this time taking alarm; for, though in 1885 the Rand goldfields showed to the world at large few indications of their immense wealth, the Transvaal itself may well have suspected it. By 1890 the inrush of foreigners had become enormous, and the franchise qualification had been stiffened to fourteen years' residence. President Kruger, however misguidedly, felt then that his back was to the wall. Concessions he made in the Bloemfontein conference he was unable to make without severe and baffling restrictions. And, the moment these restrictions were objected to, his fear of the Rand's dominion of his country made him detect a baleful purpose for which such objections were but a cloak. He said that, if he granted the franchise demanded, he might as well haul down the Boer flag.

His fears may have been partly personal; his obstinate desire to keep the Transvaal an agricultural state may have been obscurantist. But that the grant of the franchise to the Rand population must have completely altered Boer rule cannot be denied. The mass of the Uitlanders could not have made the kind of burgher President Kruger understood—the hardened campaigner ready at twelve hours' notice to be in the saddle with rifle and rations. The new electorate might have become burghers in name, but they would have remained at heart foreigners with little, if any, intention of making the Transvaal their home. But, it may be

asked, was Kruger's conception of burghership keeping pace with even the development of the Boers themselves? Dangers of earlier days no longer threatened from the Zulus, Matabeles or Mashonas. Did not Kruger's political philosophy rely a good deal on the ignorance and lack of concern for administration in his ideal burgher, by which a corrupt oligarchy kept itself in power? The question has considerable force. Kruger's objections to the transitory nature of the Rand population, which came into the country to make money, and went out when it had made it, might have been applied to many members of his own administration. The Boers had been too small and too scattered a population to equip fully an administrative system. Dutch officials in large numbers had been introduced; and many of these had come as definitely to make money, and to go home again, as the Uitlander had. The Boer Government, however, had by this time largely been purged of imported officials; once there had been nearly 2000 Dutchmen in administrative posts; now there were only 306. Kruger clearly believed that, if he gave the Uitlanders the franchise they demanded, the State he had built up would not survive. There had been men of weight and influence in his Government who had not shared his fears. Once or twice, as in the case of the Uitlanders' petition to the Raad in 1894, Liberal opinion among the Boers had made itself apparent; General Joubert was known to share in it. But the Jameson Raid had ruined the influence of this party. It had immensely strengthened President Kruger's prejudices and crippled the influence of those who had worked to free his mind of its direst suspicions. From the date of the Raid, Kruger's views were dominant, and the most open-minded Boers dropped out of office.[1]

One possible way of peace had remained: the English

[1] J. A. Hobson, *The War in South Africa*, page 20.

might have remembered that Kruger was old, and waited for his death. It was more than likely that, when that occurred, the Liberal Boers would have returned to the Raad, and they would have been aided by the leading Afrikanders of the Cape, who recognised the necessity of reforms, and did not dread them. "One and all held that, in the more distant future, England would, and must, in the natural course of events, control the Transvaal politically as well as economically."[1] To them, all seemed to hinge on the Uitlanders' exercise of some patience. General Butler, the British Commander-in-Chief at Capetown, had said: "What South Africa wants is rest, and not a surgical operation."

Yet from the moment when Mr Chamberlain accepted the Uitlanders' petition to the Queen it was clear that the policy was not to be one of delay. What was the reason of this decision? It cannot genuinely be found in the material conditions of the Uitlanders. They complained of taxation, but the Transvaal took only five per cent. of their profits, and most of their companies were paying colossal dividends. They complained of the cost of living, but that, as we saw, was falling. They complained of backwardness, and a certain amount of corruption in civil administration; but that could hardly have been regarded as occasion for an outpouring of blood. Taking together the tone of Mr Chamberlain's and the tone of Sir Alfred Milner's despatches, it seems possible to trace two main lines of impulse. In South Africa there were wounded pride, incessant irritation, and a knowledge that Mr Rhodes entertained huge territorial projects. In England there were impatience with a slow-going people and a general restlessness and business enthusiasm which could be swept into any outcry for expansion. A more specific factor, but one which could only operate after the more general impulses were at

[1] J. A. Hobson, *The War in South Africa.*

work, was England's knowledge of extensive purchases of armaments on the part of the Boers, since 1896. It is true that Captain Younghusband,[1] from the point of view of a traveller, and Lord Rosmead, from the official point of view, both expressed the opinion that these armaments were for defensive purposes. But could such a distinction at this time be drawn ? It could not. Temper on the Rand had risen to such a height that no one could say what the alarm of the Boers would regard as an implicit ultimatum. England's massing of troops on the Colonial frontiers in September, too, was a movement of alarm, and not of offence. At any time during 1899 the Boers might have decided that, for their own safety, they must push Great Britain back.

At the time of the Jameson Raid, England had been startled by the revelation of a state of feeling of which she had had no warning.[2] Now again feeling on the spot had settled the question. But this time the formal case had been prepared alongside the events ; and it was a case that fitted exactly with Mr Chamberlain's mind. He adopted with real enthusiasm demands for constitutional progress, administrative reform, and the well-being of industry. At the time when the Uitlanders' petition was sinking into English minds, and preparations for a meeting between Sir Alfred Milner and President Kruger were taking place, Mr Rhodes was in England. He had come for more capital for his railway projects in new British South African territories, and he had been to Berlin for an interview with the German Emperor. This visit, carefully chronicled, could but stimulate the public imagination of his great schemes at the very moment when British enterprise in South Africa was represented as being checked by the Boers. Mr Rhodes raised his capital without much difficulty (though it was

[1] *South Africa of To-Day*, page 101.

[2] Vol. i., page 384.

believed that he had vainly tried to interest the Treasury first), and announcement of the fact was accompanied by the comment, "we must firmly uphold the flag." [1]

The meeting between Sir Alfred Milner and Mr Kruger took place at Bloemfontein on 30th May. Sir Alfred Milner proposed that Mr Kruger should grant a five years' retro-active qualification for the franchise, with adequate (not proportionate) representation in the Raad of the Uitlander population. Kruger's reply was an offer of a seven years' qualification, and five members out of a total of thirty-one, in the Raad. For the moment it seemed to casual onlookers in England that Kruger was softening. They did not realise that in Kruger's stipulation that his proposed grant should be accompanied by England's agreement to refer to arbitration any difficulties arising in future between England and the Transvaal lay all the old battered question of "suzerainty"; and that to have granted this clause would have been to grant that England held no peculiar relation to the Transvaal. On the whole the general English feeling in June and July was that President Kruger was showing he could be squeezed, and to our advantage. That was the sense in which Milner's notorious despatch was interpreted. The despatch, though dated 5th May, was not published until 13th June, when a Transvaal Blue Book was issued. Milner wrote: "The spectacle of thousands of British subjects kept permanently in the position of Helots, constantly chafing under undoubted grievances, and calling vainly to her Majesty's Government for redress, does steadily undermine the influence and reputation of Great Britain, and the respect for the British Government within the Queen's dominions"; he further expressed his belief that the time had arrived for "some striking proof of the intention of her Majesty's Government not to be ousted from its position in South

[1] *The Times*, 27th April 1899.

Africa." That despatch appeared to many level-headed persons in England, in no way predisposed to the Boers, to be exaggerated and rhetorical; "Helot" was a ridiculous word to employ. But still the hope prevailed that strong language was being used as a preventive. In June and July a Franchise Bill was under discussion in the Raad, and the Afrikanders of the Cape were active in persuasion in support of it. During its discussion it received practically the form of Kruger's offer at Bloemfontein. Comments of newspapers and English public men upon it were for a while non-committal. July was not far advanced, however, before English comment was clear. Two conditions were attached to the proposed franchise: one, that applicants must produce a certificate of continuous registration of residence in the Transvaal; and the other that the new burghership would not be made permanent until the first Raad elected under the new conditions had pronounced upon it. It was instantly pointed out, with regard to the first condition, that registration had been allowed by the Transvaal authorities to fall practically into disuse; few Uitlanders, if any, could produce such certificates. With regard to the second, the members for the Rand would be so far in a minority that no one could take seriously a franchise dependent on reconsideration by the Raad. These misgivings were fatal; the Uitlanders were afraid of divesting themselves of their existing nationality, in order to become burghers, without the assurance of being in their new state a considerable and forcible body.

From this time on the negotiations with the Transvaal in effect ceased to hang on the franchise. Mr Chamberlain sent, towards the end of July, a despatch proposing the setting up of a joint commission to examine the Transvaal's new measure; and the controversy thenceforward turned on whether or no Great Britain still could claim suzerainty over the Transvaal. For that was the sense in which the

Boers interpreted this proposal. Little could be hoped from such a discussion. It had been raised during 1898 between Mr Chamberlain and Dr Leyds, with small profit. The Transvaal then maintained that the claim to suzerainty had been dropped in the London Convention of 1884: Great Britain maintained that it had never been intentionally dropped, and that the mere absence of the term from the opening passage of that convention proved nothing, since that passage was not technically a preamble.

The controversy had now ceased to be one of reasoning and representation of grievances. It had bared the old root of dislike and suspicion, and had entered upon a course, the issue of which could only be the Transvaal's surrender of its claim to be an independent sovereign State, or war. It is most important to note this changed aspect. Suzerainty was not a necessary condition for obtaining redress of the Uitlanders' grievances. The fact that, after the futile discussion of 1898, it now reappeared as in the last resort the vital question, showed that each of the negotiating parties had come to the conclusion that the aim of the other party was hostile. The despatches [1]

[1] The character and dates of the exchanges may be briefly set out as follows :—

(*a*) British despatch proposing a joint commission	2nd Aug.
(*b*) Transvaal reply, declining this, and proposing instead a five years' retro-active franchise, and an increase of seats in the Raad, on conditions amounting to recognition of the Transvaal as a sovereign state	12th Aug.
(*c*) British reply, insisting on suzerainty .	28th Aug.
(*d*) Transvaal reply denying suzerainty, withdrawing the last offer, proposing to revert to the joint commission, and asking for explanation of movements of troops on the Natal frontier . . .	2nd Sept.
(*e*) British reply, refusing to revert, and stating	

exchanged during September were a mere gaining of time. On the Boer side this time was occupied in such preparations as the burning of the veldt, to hasten the growth of new grass for the horses during a campaign; the driving off behind the Drakensberg of the cattle and sheep of the Free State, which were accustomed to wander on the Natal boundary at pasture; and in accumulation of stores at Volksrust, Vryheid, and Standerton. On the British side there was an increase, gravely inadequate to the event, but in itself considerable, of the forces in the South African colonies. The first move was made on 6th July, when two companies of Royal Engineers and departmental corps, and a group of officers, including Colonel R. S. S. Baden-Powell and Colonel Plumer, were ordered to South Africa, "to organise the residents, as well as the police and local forces, at various points on the frontier." On 9th August two battalions of infantry were ordered to Natal; and the announcement was made that 11,000 men were being held ready in India. After the Cabinet Council of 8th September (the summoning of which was so eagerly discussed that it was obviously treated by popular opinion as practically a Council of War) the Indian drafts were ordered to embark.

Whether a stronger or more united Liberal Opposition in the British Parliament could have checked the course of these events must remain uncertain. Mr John Morley

that H.M. Government proposed now to formulate proposals *de novo* . .	8th Sept.
(*f*) Transvaal reply, expressing surprise at this communication, and again proposing to revert to a joint commission . .	16th Sept.
(*g*) British reiteration of the despatch of 8th September	22nd Sept.
(*h*) Boer despatch, requesting to know what decision H. M. Government had taken as to new proposals	30th Sept.
(*i*) Boer ultimatum	9th Oct.

was regarded as almost the only real Liberal of commanding power in a perfectly clear frame of mind ; and he, with a small band of comrades, among whom must be mentioned Mr Courtney, Mr Philip Stanhope, Mr G. W. E. Russell, Sir Wilfrid Lawson and Mr Labouchere, had the courage, at the moment when the Jingo spirit was rising in England, to hold meetings of protest. By the middle of September the police were warning the conveners of such gatherings that organised interruption might at any moment amount to breaking-up the meeting. That this band of Liberals was comparatively small need not be attributed to a mere inclination on the part of the rest to surrender to a violent current. There was, as has already been said, much in the Liberal party that necessarily responded to a skilful statement of such grievances as taxation without representation, monopolist control of trade, mismanagement of administration, and corruption in high places. The questions whether or no these grievances were so urgent as to demand instant redress, whether a few years would not have seen profound changes in the dominant personalities of the Transvaal, may indeed have been important —may have been even the root of the matter—but were certainly difficult to present, and uninspiring in a time of tense feeling. The actual balance of opinion in the Liberal camp was not quite fairly shown by the division taken at the meeting of the National Liberal Federation on 13th December, when a resolution that "the war was one which a wise statesmanship could and would have avoided" was carried by only 114 votes to 94. We had by then been at war for two months, and were at that moment sustaining serious reverses. The more apposite fact is that a large body of Liberal opinion inclined to the view that, if the Uitlanders' grievances could be shown to be exaggerated, Kruger's attitude was equally exaggerated.

One other point remains to be noted. In an article

in *The Nineteenth Century* [1] (valuable as appearing in a review not given to opposing public opinion) a contributor writing of the tone of the British Press during the month of October remarked; "Surely we never before went to war when there was so much uncertainty as to the *casus belli*." It might have been supposed that continuous comment on the relations between Great Britain and the Transvaal for six months before the war might have instructed the public. The truth perhaps was that England had never acquired a real relation with her colonies. A long period of indifference to them, in which self-government was readily granted, and responsibilities were dormant, had been succeeded by a period of sentiment due largely to Mr Chamberlain. When war broke out, and offers of assistance arrived from one colony after another the music halls rang with songs about "the lion's cubs" and "sons across the seas" which could not but have been ludicrously offensive to any Colonial confronted with the audiences that sang them. Those who opposed the war spirit in England were moved, not only by their view of the policy that preceded it, but by a conviction that, in the minds of the great mass of the people, the undertaking was regarded with no proper sense of responsibility or seriousness of purpose.

[1] November 1899.

CHAPTER IV

1899 : THE WAR AND THE NATION

IT is no part of the object of this book to relate in detail the progress of the war in South Africa; that has been done by works already in existence. The course of feeling in England, however, may provide some commentary on the war.

Certainly, if we never entered on a war with less knowledge of the root of it, we never entered on one in more complete ignorance of the quality of our opponents. Here, again, the absence of a genuine relation between England and the colonies was largely to blame. Had we had an honest respect for them, or they for us, such ignorance would have been impossible. But merely sentimental Imperialism was invoked; and it became apparent that the nation had but a sentimental view of its capacity for war, or of the task before it. Comic prints in England on the very eve of the outbreak presented the Boer forces as shambling regiments of bearded oafs, who grinned vacuously, and fell over their own rifles.[1] It was part of the prevailing ignorance that they were nearly always represented on foot. Again, although, in view of the many alarmist statements that had been made about the Boer armaments, there could hardly be ignorance of their possession of big and modern guns, yet the power of these guns was unknown; and the personnel of the Boer artillery arm was believed to be poor, and far below a proper standard of training in such matters, for instance, as the use

[1] See, *e.g.*, *Punch*, 4th October 1899.

of time-fuses.[1] The party capital made by the Conservatives out of the course taken by the Liberal Government after Majuba was now recoiling on them; their cry had always been that England had made an egregious surrender, that the Boers had only won a few chance engagements, in which we had been caught ill prepared, and that they could never have endured a campaign. The natural effect of this upon the public was to make it forget anything it had ever heard about the Boer's fighting qualities in the early days of the Transvaal, and imagine that he had no power of acting as an army against an army. True, a general feeling existed, when the Boer ultimatum was issued on 9th October, that we had been caught before we had completed our arrangements: there were still contingents from India on the sea. But deficiencies, it was thought, could swiftly be supplied. General Buller was despatched as Commander-in-Chief, and the transport service, which turned out before many weeks were over to be one of the few matters on which we could pride ourselves, began to make up as speedily as possible the numbers of our arms in South Africa. The common popular opinion was that the war would be over by Christmas. Even the numbers of the enemy in the field against us were vague to the last degree in the public mind. To the end of the war accurate information on that point was hardly obtained. The most usual estimates in the Press put the Boer forces at something between 25,000 and 35,000. The British Intelligence Department, it appeared later, estimated the Transvaal men alone at 32,000, and the Orange Free Staters at 22,000.

Before General Buller reached the Cape, England was facing the fact that her forces everywhere in South Africa were on the defensive, and even desperately on the defensive. Early exchanges in the north of Natal, the surrender of British forces at Nicholson's Nek, the courageous, dogged

[1] *The Times*, 11th October 1899.

victory of Talana Hill, the dashing charges of Elandslaagte, had conveyed no particular message to the public, whatever they may have conveyed to the War Office, of revised opinions on the Boer marksmanship and the Boer artillery. But the succeeding stage, when it became clear that, even with the arrival of all the forces available, the war would have to begin at every point with recovery of our own territory, caused a great intensification of bellicose feeling in England. It grew with such rapidity that, when Parliament met, as it was bound to do, to vote supplies, and an Appropriation Bill was introduced, only twenty-eight members of the Opposition were found to vote against it. The attack on the Government for their policy had not, indeed, been a weak one. The amendment moved by Mr Philip Stanhope on the introduction of the Bill had produced one of the memorable nights in the history of the House of Commons; the galleries and the floor were alike crowded; and Mr Chamberlain had spoken for three hours in the Government's defence. But the division lobbies gave the first sign of that prevailing line of argument which left the Radical stalwarts so few in number—the argument that, whatever its merits, the war had now begun, and to maintain protest against it could only add to the difficulties.

Throughout November there was no event to cause any profound change in popular feeling. The general view remained that the Boer ultimatum had caught us with our dispositions incomplete; but the adequacy of the dispositions themselves was not generally questioned. People settled down to take in how our forces lay; early in the month the newspapers began to publish daily small articles by "military experts," with the object of making comprehensible to the ordinary reader a campaign which had, by the swiftness of the Boer attack, taken an unexpected form. The enemy's forces were in two main bodies, one on the east, besieging Ladysmith, and another on the

west, which, leaving Kimberley and Mafeking beleaguered, had penetrated southward as far as Belmont, in Cape Colony. The British attack, when the main body from England with General Buller and General Methuen had settled into place, would be delivered at these two points. Between these two points, though no equally considerable force of Boers had crossed the southern frontier of the Orange Free State, was a British division under General Gatacre. For the moment even the alarm caused by the revelation of the size and strength of the Boer guns was relieved; on 30th October, just before Ladysmith was completely invested, one of the last trains to run into the town brought a naval brigade, supplied by the cruiser *Powerful*; and one of the happiest popular moments of the war was that in which it was known that the sailors had, by their own handiness, invented and made field carriages for some of their big guns. For this stroke of inventiveness, Captain Percy Scott, of the *Powerful*, became a popular hero. The besieging of Ladysmith was less galling to people at home (as it was now known to be less menacing to the besieged themselves) when the place had guns not incapable of replying to the enormous Creusot pieces which the Boers had dragged to the surrounding hill-tops. The naval brigade had brought with them several 12-pounder quick-firers. and even some of the big 4.7-inch guns. We had been caught at an extraordinary disadvantage in artillery. This small republic had moved into battle guns of a size which had never hitherto been regarded as mobile pieces. But at last, when we had made our bitter discovery, we had corrected our mistake in a way that might legitimately give us pride. Not only in Ladysmith, but also with General Buller at Chievely, and with General Methuen on the Orange River, there were by the beginning of November naval brigades with their big and efficient guns.

Far less criticism of the Government was taking place

than might have been expected. It was really saved from such consequences of its own apparent ignorance of the Boer resources by the fact that the Boers had attacked after a curt ultimatum. The result was that excuses were found for the Government, and the engagements at the end of October and during November did not daunt the public at home. The battles of Talana Hill, Elandslaagte, and Rietfontein in Natal, and those of Belmont and Enslin in Cape Colony, where General Methuen began his advance on 22nd November, had lost us on an average 40 to 50 killed and 150 to 200 wounded. They had shown the disastrous efficacy of Boer marksmanship, and the power of the Mauser magazine rifle. But they had been battles which had not shaken traditional opinion of the British army's methods. True, it was already obvious that use of cover was the enemy's strength, and it was also obvious that our methods were strangely ill adapted to meet an army entirely mounted; victory on our side was inconclusive when the desperate winning of a hill revealed only bodies of the enemy scudding away on ponies out of range of pursuit. But as yet England appeared to find no heart-shaking quality in the war; the casualty lists were not yet ghastly; subscriptions to the relief funds and a patriotic enthusiasm seemed all that was specially called for. A jest could still be made of the subaltern starting for the war and packing his polo-sticks, because his idea was that one would fight in the morning and have time for a little polo in the afternoon.

Then, late in November, on the 28th, occurred a battle which gave pause even to the newspaper reader—Methuen's battle at the Modder River. This was not so much because it was more costly in life than others had been—the casualty list amounted to about 450—as that it showed the Boers to be under leadership and discipline of a wholly unexpected kind. They had waited in unperceived entrenchments for the advancing force, and had

reserved their fire till the British were within 700 yards. They had dug their trenches, not on the slopes, to which artillery fire would naturally be directed, but on the low plain. After the first outbreak of the Boer fire the British had dropped to the ground, and, save for a force which managed to work round the Boer flank, had spent the whole long day lying flat on the spot where they had been checked, firing at the rare and elusive marks the Boers gave them, while the artillery on both sides kept up a more obvious battle. This engagement was the first to startle England with certain facts which very soon became painfully evident. One was that the Boers were able to carry out secretly entrenching operations on a very large scale, so that an army could move unsuspectingly on to ground completely dominated by rifle-fire with accurately known ranges. A second was that in such cases the force immediately under fire was reduced to something like immobility; it could not retire, any more than it could advance, and was confined to maintaining a day-long rifle duel, with the disadvantage that it lay itself in the open, while its enemy was under cover. A third was that magazine rifles combined with marksmanship as good as that of the Boers rendered it impossible to carry such trenches save by more or less prolonged turning movements.

However, the main army under Buller had yet to move, and such lessons as there may have been in the Modder River battle were not pressed home. The name of Cronje, the Boer commander at this point, had not yet achieved its grimmest hold upon the public mind. A general sense that modern war produced ordeals of which the most acute military authorities could have no previous conception remained the leading idea. This caused an outbreak of resentment against the critical and even jeering tone current in the Continental Press. There might, indeed, be little excuse for our ignorance in the matter of artillery;

but no one, it was maintained, could possibly have been prepared by theory for the lessons we were learning in the power of the modern rifle well used. Consequently it were better for nations not undergoing the fiery ordeal to be thankful that the lesson was laid before them at no cost to themselves, and to preserve some show of respectful observation. The German Emperor and Empress were just at this time in England, visiting the Queen at Windsor. It was acknowledged that the visit was well meant; but a people on the verge of exasperation felt that at such a time sympathy was rather too ostentatious to be met with real gratitude. The Queen herself was remaining away from her beloved Balmoral, in order that the people might feel her as little withdrawn as might be in a time of trial. Aged and infirm as she now was, she had inspected the composite regiment of Household Cavalry which left for South Africa in November. The country thought of her with sorrow; that at this far period of her long reign her people should be at war seemed to most of her subjects likely to be an anxiety too great for her failing strength.

Acceptance of the Kaiser's sympathetic interest was rather hindered than helped by a speech delivered by Mr Chamberlain in November, in which he spoke of the possibility of a triple understanding between England, the United States, and Germany. He showed in this a curious failure of his usual capacity for gauging public opinion; and he probably never in his life made a less popular suggestion. To begin with, it sounded like a half-admission, at a most inopportune moment, that we were nervous about our general position. Then it also appeared to be a rather adulatory acknowledgment of the fact that England was relieved by the Kaiser's careful abstention from anything which might be taken as an encouragement to the Boers. There were a good many who felt that Mr Chamberlain had presumed on the undoubted pre-eminence he had gained by recent events, and imagined

that he had shown himself capable of directing a *Welt-politik*, or at least that his countrymen would now believe him capable of it. He was immediately undeceived. The speech had, even from the organs of his own party, the chilliest treatment; and, although criticism of the Government was for the most part held in check on the Ministerial side, Mr Chamberlain very nearly did it the disservice of precipitating such criticism by propounding large ill-digested ideas at a moment when the Government was displayed as managing none too competently the business already on its hands.

But all such feeling was swamped, before December was half over, in a shock of bewilderment, and furious determination to underestimate no more a demand which had suddenly grown appalling. The "Black Week" of 11th–16th December made the war the frightful reality which it had not yet been, in spite of patriotic songs and enthusiastic leave-takings of regiments and endless talk of war. On the Monday in that week the news was published that General Gatacre, moving in the midway region between the two main armies, which had hitherto produced no encounters of great importance, had marched his men by night, almost certainly under treacherous guidance, into a fatal ambuscade. His troops, not having yet experienced, as Methuen's army had, the completely impenetrable character of the rifle-fire of entrenched Boers, had attempted to rush the hills from which they were being shot down. The result was that a mere remnant of the force could be extricated from the trap, and though only twenty-six were killed, and about seventy wounded, six hundred had been taken prisoners, and two guns lost. By itself this disaster at Stormberg would have been serious, but not terrible; it was blackened by what followed. On the Thursday came news of a disaster which was wholly dreadful. Methuen had advanced from the Modder River, where, after the ultimate success of his

turning movement had caused the abandonment of the Boer trenches during the night, he had rested his men (who had fought three battles in a week during November) and received some reinforcement. Cronje was known to have occupied the time in entrenching a new position at Magersfontein; and against this Methuen now moved. What England heard was that, marching in the darkness into wire entanglements before the trenches, which had given the alarm, a column nearly 4000 strong had been absolutely cut to pieces by concentrated rifle and machine-gun fire, before it had taken open order. The Highland Brigade, led by General Wauchope, which had come up fresh and eager among the latest of Methuen's reinforcements, had been the main body of this column, and upon them had fallen the worst and most murderous slaughter of the war. No less than 600 had gone down, including the General, in the first few minutes. Again, as at the Modder River, the dreadful opening of battle was followed by a long day of fighting at a cruel disadvantage. More troops were moved up rapidly, some flanking attacks by the Boers were held off, artillery fell to work against the trenched hills, and regiment after regiment took up the rifle duel. But no turning movement could be attempted after such a disastrous beginning to the battle. The lines of Magersfontein remained victorious, and Methuen withdrew again to the Modder River. England faced for the first time a casualty list which numbered all but 1000, of which over 700 were in the Highland Brigade. Then, all too soon on this defeat, came the news that Buller himself had failed as completely in his first movement in force. Here again the Boers had amply entrenched themselves on hills north of the Tugela River. The attack upon them had been repulsed, again with a casualty list of almost 1000 men, but the centre of disaster here had been, not a sudden overwhelming slaughter of men, but the loss of no less

than ten guns. Two batteries of field artillery had advanced to an exposed spot within 1000 yards of the enemy's position, and the Boers shot down horses and men with such deadly accuracy and rapidity that only a tiny group was at last left to take refuge in a hollow, leaving the guns bare on the plain. A gallant effort to save them was led by three of Buller's aides-de-camp, and two guns were actually rescued. But the remaining ten fell into the Boers' hands. The troops were withdrawn to camp, leaving 970 on the field, and 250 prisoners.

So the week ended. There had been often enough in English history battles far more bloody, and campaigns in most ways more terrible. But they had not occurred in days of cheap newspapers and instantaneous transmission of news. Casualty lists then were lump sums, impersonal round figures; certainty came but long afterwards to homes which through the months had lost their men without knowing it; and although the slow dissemination of news meant a perpetual watchfulness and anxiety it must have been of a duller kind than the sensation of sharing almost at the moment in defeat. The Black Week indeed brought war home. The lists of names occupying column after column of the newspapers, the sombre crowds waiting round the door of that room in the War Office where the lists were issued, the knowledge that the whole of our boasted arms were reduced to the pause of defeat, bit as with acid. For the moment life ran more dumbly in England than it had run since the early days of the Indian Mutiny—dumbly, and yet intensely. It was one of the grim signs of that week that women then first began to buy newspapers, as men do, from the sellers in the streets.

The Government acted now promptly, and acted well, both from the point of view of the conduct of the war and from the point of view of restoring confidence at home. It was announced on the Monday morning of the following

week—18th December—that Lord Roberts had been appointed to the chief command in South Africa, and that Lord Kitchener of Khartoum would accompany him as his Chief of Staff. Nothing could have administered a more immediate or more vivifying tonic. An adored old soldier, whom men would follow anywhere and anyhow, whose reputation rang with tales of tight places brilliantly faced, and a young soldier who seemed to have a cold unastonished genius for victory—the thought of these two put fresh heart into England. It was intimated that no formal supersession of General Buller was intended—and indeed it had been clear that he too had a most valuable gift of making men follow him and believe in him, even in defeat—but that the development of events had shown that what was intended to be the main attack on the Boers, and as such had been undertaken by him as Commander-in-Chief, had become a more or less partial attack. As both our main armies at present in the field were deeply engaged, it was necessary now to make fresh dispositions, and to have a Commander-in-Chief apart from both of the armies in check. The announcement of these appointments was followed by a great outburst of enthusiasm for extending the scope of our forces. Large contingents from the colonies, offered while the negotiations were running their last stage, had been accepted; and some had been operating with the British forces for weeks past. Others were being raised, and now with quickened pace. In England a great call was made for yeomanry. If the Boers could raise a force entirely mounted, and show us the result in an astonishing mobility, could not a fox-hunting nation do the same? In every shire men answered the call. At the same time infantry volunteers were asked for, and the City of London in especial set itself to raise a regiment and equip the men entirely at its own expense. The end of the year was buzzing with enrollings, drillings, equippings; London was full of men in new

khaki uniforms, who were made free of every music hall. Crofters and gillies and miners and hard-muscled shipyard men from Scotland, farmers' sons, squires' sons, and solid labourers from the English counties, clerks and artisans from the towns, all poured into the new forces. Great lairds like Lord Lovat, rich men like Lord Strathcona, raised their own bodies of horsemen, the former in Scotland, the latter in Canada.

Both in equipment and in such hurried drill as could be given, the learning of lessons began to be evident. Already people were saying that, just as flying colours and beating drums had disappeared from modern warfare, so scarlet and brass, badges and pipeclayed belts were going now. Nothing that could give the least hold to the eye of one of those terrible marksmen in the trenches must be allowed. Our losses in officers had been especially severe. Gold lace, a buckle here and there, a sash, had made them fatally distinct marks. Henceforth a tab more or less on the collar would have to suffice. Brown leather belts, leather-masked sword-hilts, khaki-covered buttons, distinguished the new equipments that paraded London. The less there was to tell an officer by, the better officer he; the less a mounted man looked like a cavalryman, the better for his work. Command had begun to mean a new thing—not the picturesque, gallant figure standing up and keeping the ranks calm by parade of coolness, but hitting a man between the eyes for coming out unnecessarily from behind a stone. Courage in the ranks meant less the reckless, daring charge up a slope than the infinitely patient, infinitely painful crawl through a long day.

What would come out of the melting-pot could not yet be seen. That much, very much, had gone in was perhaps the one clear truth of the close of the year. That respect for the army's heads, and for the army's officers, had not gone in too is the greatest tribute that will ever be paid to the qualities of the classes those men were drawn from.

CHAPTER V

THE WAR AND THE NATION (*continued*)

THE opening of the year 1900 found the British public in a state of raw nerves. The first shock of the December disasters had been too intense for any petty expression at the moment; and the new commands and the enthusiasm of enlistment had carried the nation through Christmas. Presents for the troops in the field, headed by the Queen's gift of a box of chocolate to each private soldier, occupied the minds and the organising capacities of a great many persons; plum puddings, tobacco, cigarettes, and all kinds of creature comforts were sent out by tons. Public subscriptions supplemented the private efforts of all who had friends or relations at the front; and though this kind of effort might be regarded as rather trifling, it was a far from useless distraction of thought, both at home and in the camps where the vast miscellaneous distributions were made.

But such a distraction could not be lasting. Even if anxiety had not returned in other ways, the news on 6th January would have aroused it sharply. Throughout that day the telegrams in the evening newspapers produced the most disturbing uncertainty about Ladysmith that had yet been experienced. The Boers had attacked in force, and the battle was still raging on Cæsar's Camp and Waggon Hill, two of the garrison's outposts. Of course the failure of Buller's relieving force had previously caused apprehensions. Under the bombardment Ladysmith was known to be enduring, it had hardly been regarded as likely to bear a long siege, and that it had not sur-

rendered before Buller could move was a matter for satisfaction. But with his defeat it became obvious that relief might be indefinitely delayed. Sir George White, the commanding officer in Ladysmith, had been magnificently reassuring. To a depressed message from Buller immediately after the battle of Colenso (they were in communication by heliograph and searchlight) he had answered that he could make his supplies last out, and had no thought of surrender. But strong assault by the Boers had hardly been anticipated in England (which had been consoling itself by saying that its enemy might be a deadly shot in trenches, but would not risk charging), so that the news of 6th January brought the real dread, whether, after more than two months' siege, the holding-out of the garrison could include the repulsing of a vigorous attack.

It did. Next day England knew that, after the sharpest hand-to-hand fighting, in which the Devons and the Imperial Light Horse—a body of South African volunteers—had for all time inscribed their names on the history of the siege, the Boers had been beaten off. But, at last, the nervousness had bitten too deeply to be lessened, even by such news, and such heroism. From now onwards the references to Ladysmith always betrayed a gloomy undercurrent of belief that the town must fall, and that we had better make up our minds to the fact.[1] The two other places, the beleaguering of which had not appeared so very important while our armies still seemed to be on the move, shared now in the strained national attention. Ladysmith, Kimberley and Mafeking came to stand for all the hopes and the confidence that had formerly been given to the armies. Kimberley, whither Mr Rhodes had gone just as the war broke out, was a place of some importance—especially, to the Boers, when he was in it—and its siege was a normal piece of warfare. It was the

[1] See *The Times*, 16th January 1900.

gate on that side of the Free State for invasion. The case of Mafeking, however, was different. Situated far in the north, and not occupied by any body of troops considerable enough to require isolation, the town might apparently have been let alone. The story of Mafeking appears to be a story of unadulterated combativeness. The Boers decided to fight there, and in the town was a man delighted to oblige them, Colonel Baden-Powell. Neither side had anything strategic to gain.

But all three places became equally important now to English feeling; worn nerves needed focussing points of some kind to work at. Early in January there were signs that dissatisfaction with the Government was gathering to a head; and the news of another costly action fought by Buller, without a step gained towards Ladysmith, produced an explosion of bitterness. Starting from his base on 10th January Buller had crossed the Tugela at two points a considerable distance west of Colenso, taking a week for the operations, and on the 23rd part of his force had captured, by the severest fighting, a hill called Spion Kop, from which it appeared that the Boer trenches could be completely commanded. But owing to the disposition of the ground our artillery were unable to master the Boer artillery turned upon the hill-top; and after a murderous day in which men, forced by the small compass of the hill-top to lie in close formation, had been cruelly battered by Boer guns, the ground so expensively won was abandoned, and by the 27th Buller was back again on the south side of the river. The deliberate strategy of this battle, the splendid gallantry of the assault, the great news that at last we held a position actually commanding the terrible Boer lines, had been so cheering that the announcement of the withdrawal strained the tension in England beyond breaking point. The Government were roundly told that they had muddled from beginning to end; Mr Balfour was warned that his attitude under criticism was far too jaunty

and frivolous; the war had been a series of calamitous mistakes, relieved only by the courage and endurance of officers and men; and the result was that we stood without a plan of campaign.[1] Parliament met on 30th January, and although there may not have been much sympathy with extreme Liberal opinion against the war, the announcement that a vote of censure would be moved by the Opposition leaders was certainly not regarded as a mere hampering of the Government. Ugly things were being said already of the War Office contracts, and stories were coming to England of the miserable quality of many of the contract supplies, of dangerous rations, of wretched forage; even the ammunition was not above criticism. By the beginning of March it was becoming clear that in this matter too the grossest incompetence had been revealed; and such serious instances were brought forward in the House of Commons that a Select Committee was appointed. The Government had certain consolations to fall back upon. The unexampled trade prosperity of the past year[2] was a great asset; the revenue returns were very good, customs being up by £660,000 and excise by over £1,000,000, with one quarter of the financial year yet to run; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer was evidently going to have a larger surplus than he had expected. Little legislation was proposed in the Speech from the Throne; a measure for reforming company law and a Moneylenders Bill were the only items of any importance.

Meanwhile Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener had been assembling a considerable force at the Modder River, combining new arrivals with the existing army under Methuen. But their preparations were being made with new secrecy, and no word of them came through to soothe English irritation. A third movement by Buller, developing into the capture, under cover of a bombardment,

[1] *The Times*, 27th January 1900.
[2] See p. 13.

startling even in this war, of Vaalkranz Hill, and ending once again in withdrawal, was received with exasperation. The losses this time had been lighter—a casualty list of 250, as against the lamentable 1500 of Spion Kop; but the popular nicknaming of Buller as "the Bull-dog" began to assume a rueful twist under this series of exhibitions of doggedness. A good many generals in South Africa paid heavily, less for mistakes of their own than for the all-pervading original mistake as to the task set us by this war. The battle of Vaalkranz took popular attention at the moment of Lord Roberts's first movement, and little heed was paid to the advance of the Highland Brigade towards the extreme right of the Boer position at Magersfontein. So the excitement a few days later was all the more keen, when England suddenly became aware that, the watchfulness of the Boers having thus been drawn towards their right, a large body of cavalry, some 5000 in number, had ridden hard round their left, crossed the Modder twenty-five miles east of Magersfontein, and practically galloped past the only attempt made to stop it. Almost before England had had time to take in what had happened—the mustering of this flying force in the rear of Methuen's army, and its launching under the man who was henceforth to be a popular idol as a dashing cavalryman, General French—the news came that, covering 100 miles in four days, this swift march had raised the siege of Kimberley. Lord Roberts had got to work. Indeed his great name seemed to act like a charm. On the very day when Kimberley was relieved, his infantry appeared in force on the extreme left of the Boer lines, capturing as they went Jacobsdal (where the City Imperial Volunteers were for the first time in action); and the grim Cronje, alarmed for his communications with his base at Bloemfontein, had hurriedly abandoned his position; the awful trenches of Magersfontein no longer loomed over us. Now ensued the most

tense period of the war. Cronje managed to pass the outer horn of Roberts's force; but if he were to reach Bloemfontein he must cross the Modder River, and there were but three drifts available to him. Roberts held Klip Drift already. French, hastening across from Kimberley, seized Wolveskraal Drift. Cronje turned to Paardeberg Drift, between the two—and the vice closed on him. He lay in laager, and on 18th February Kitchener attacked him. It was a heavy battle, with 1100 casualties; but it pinned Cronje into a narrow space of two miles, clinging to his waggons. So great was the change of spirit caused at home that, when Buller now started again from camp, it almost seemed as if the renewed confidence reaching out to his men from England had infected them. He completely changed his line of attack, going this time to the extreme eastward of the Colenso position, captured Hlangwane Hill, and, planting his guns there, sent his Irish Brigade, under General Fitzroy Hart, against the left-hand hills of the Boer line. The furious assault of the brigade was checked, but it lay obstinately on the sides of the hill, while Buller behind it moved the rest of his army still further east, lapping round the lines of Pieter's Hill. At the critical moment of his operations, England woke one day to the news that, after another attack on Cronje's laager, in which the Canadians, leading the van with the Gordons, had pushed a handful of men into a position enfilading the Boer trenches, Cronje had surrendered unconditionally, and between 4000 and 5000 prisoners had been taken at a blow. On the top of the exultation came the complete success of Buller. It had been another hard fight; the Colenso trenches had not been hurriedly deserted at the last, as the Magersfontein trenches had been; the casualty list reached 1600. But no more remained to do here, though at the moment this could hardly be believed by the army. Lord Dundonald, venturing greatly, took a couple of squadrons of South

African light horsemen cautiously forward. Hardly a shot was fired upon them, and in the evening of 28th February the Ladysmith siege was over, and the garrison saved.

A couple of days had changed the whole aspect of the war. A note from the Presidents of the two Boer republics to the Prime Minister, suggesting that, now British prestige was restored, peace terms might be discussed, was brushed aside as beneath consideration, save as a sign of consciousness of defeat. For the note still spoke of the republics as "sovereign international states." Bellicose temper rose again hotly, and the war spirit, which had been purged of some of its more vulgar elements during the weeks of depression, became again pervaded with boastfulness. Yet on the whole the nation had cause for pride in the story of the Ladysmith siege. It had been a cruel one. Incessant bombardment and enteric fever had literally decimated the men, without breaking their courage. Officers who could ill be spared had fallen; a month before the end of the siege one of the best known of the war correspondents, G. W. Steevens, who had made more than a passing reputation for himself in literature, had died. Now that the whole story was coming out, it was gratifying to find that here, at least, organisation had been good, the commissariat as well managed as it could possibly have been, and the defences flawless. Of the Kimberley siege much also was reported of the most gallant kind; lack of guns had been remedied by the ingenuity of the diamond-mine engineers, who constructed a piece of artillery; but here again bombardment had been terrific, and as no naval gun had opportunely arrived in Kimberley, the largest Boer artillery had been out of our range. But unfortunately the Kimberley story had less gratifying chapters. Mr Rhodes, who came to England in April, published opinions bitterly criticising Colonel Kekewich, who had been in command; and there were evidences of quarrels

in the town during the siege. Meanwhile the third siege upon which English eyes had turned early in the year, that of Mafeking, was providing extraordinary and even hilarious news. Colonel Baden-Powell was holding out, not only with courage, but with inextinguishable high spirits.

Early in March Queen Victoria drove through London, facing the fatigue in order that her people's new sense of relief and hope might be provided with an outlet. On 17th March, St Patrick's Day, there was a general wearing of the shamrock, in recognition of the gallantry of Irish regiments; and it was announced later on that royal recognition was to be accorded in the raising of a regiment of Irish Guards, to be added to the Household Brigade. The wearing of the shamrock was a curious sign of a tendency now at work to express, not merely the feeling of patriotism, but patriotic demonstrations *en masse*. The Irish regiments had certainly been gallant; but not more so, when all was said, than the Highlanders, the Lancashire men who fought Spion Kop, the west-country men in Ladysmith. The mere chance that Ireland happened to have a special day of festival at the moment, however, served the purpose of this new spirit of acting in crowds. The habit continued to distort values during the war: for often the prominence of this or that event depended on its hitting or missing some popular impulse.

A few days after the Paardeberg surrender, every detail of which was eagerly welcomed in London, with the central picture of the overweening Cronje himself at last made visible—a sullen, bearded, thick-set man in a slouch hat, riding in to his submission—Lord Roberts moved towards Bloemfontein. Two battles were fought on the way, at Poplar Grove and Driefontein; but victory was in the air, and Bloemfontein was occupied on 13th March. Everyone rejoiced in the prospect of rest for men and horses after the hard and glorious work of the past fortnight.

What yet remained to do was looked at in a new spirit. The Free State Government had gone north to Kronstadt, and the east of the Free State was still alive with the enemy; but doubt of our powers had ceased to gnaw us. Confidence was indeed so extraordinarily restored that it became positively volatile; a few weeks after this Lord Milner had to telegraph from Cape Town to urge the authorities at home to stop a constantly increasing stream of tourists. A war loan of thirty-five millions was readily taken up in March. Bearing interest at $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent., the loan had been issued at $98\frac{1}{2}$, and was subscribed eleven times over. The Budget which followed was, of course, largely a nullity, owing to the borrowings for the war. But it provided a good basis, the revenue being eight and a half millions above the estimate, and eleven and a half millions above the previous year's revenue. True, some of this was a fictitious increase. Customs and excise each accounted for an increase of nearly three millions; and much of this was undoubtedly due to premature clearances, since it was evident that new taxation was bound to be imposed. Consequently the present fattening of the revenue only meant a shrinkage in the next year, and a partial defeat of the war taxation. But next year was a long way off; no one, whatever his position, imagined for a moment in the existing circumstances that we should have any considerable force in the field twelve months hence; and so the next Budget, though it would have to carry some burden of the past, would not have to be a War Budget. In one respect the present revenue returns were a real windfall; estate duty had come out at three millions over the estimate, largely owing to the death of "Chicago Smith," a millionaire who had lived obscurely in a London club, and was but little known to the public, until the death duties on his property brought £900,000 into the Exchequer. For the coming year the Chancellor of the Exchequer put fivepence on to the income-tax,

and by this and by enhanced duties on beer, spirits, tobacco and tea promised himself twelve millions.

At the end of March and the beginning of April two occurrences in the Orange Free State chastened the over-sanguine. A force which had been operating east of Bloemfontein was ambuscaded in falling back on the town, the Boers lining a sunken watercourse in what appeared to be a harmless level plain. Cavalry and artillery rode unsuspectingly into the trap, and although the force was largely extricated, and conveyed across the river at another point, over 500 men and some thirty officers were on the casualty list, 300 prisoners had been taken, and no less than seven of the Horse Artillery guns. But the worst of this action at Sanna's Post was that it lost us the Bloemfontein water-works, and the army had to make use of the wells, which resulted in a great increase of enteric fever. Another disaster followed, a force of General Gatacre's troops being surrounded and overborne by heat, thirst and lack of ammunition. The Boers took another 900 prisoners. Criticism was more on the alert now than in the early days. From this time onwards there was a constant tendency to draw contrasts between English troops and Colonial troops, with a rather hysterical admiration of the latter and a peevish depreciation of the former. The popular picture of the British officer represented him as enslaved to drill and method, unable to see beyond his nose ; that of the Australian, the New Zealander, the South African, the Canadian, represented them as applying instinctively to war the methods of the tracker and the huntsman, scratching their rations out of nothing, and beating the Boer at his own game. There was some truth in the contrasts, though they were overdrawn ; it was forgotten, for instance, that Roberts's Horse, a body of South African colonials, had been in the Sanna's Post trap. Besides, it was obvious that British troops, not living in a land where they could learn the

methods of the tracker and the huntsman, had had to buy their learning. Those numerous writers, headed by Mr Kipling, who found delight in pungent descriptions of British stupidity set off by Colonial craftiness, have perhaps never realised one lasting effect of their indulgence in these descriptions. The British public had instilled into it a sense that its lords and masters, as represented by its military officers, were neither brilliant nor men of common-sense, but dull courageous creatures of routine. It is not possible to say one thing violently at one moment, when your eye is on a single consideration, and prevent readers from gradually, even unconsciously, extending the application of what you say. The great reaction against the Conservatives in the general election of 1906, and the undermining of the landlord class, can certainly be traced in some measure to the views Mr Kipling and his followers expressed about "regrettable incidents" of the South African War.

By the month of May the Government was under a storm of criticism. The publication of the despatches on the Spion Kop engagement had drawn the attack. For one thing, it appeared that General Buller had been asked by the Secretary for War to rewrite his despatches before publication, and had declined. He had blamed Sir Charles Warren, and the despatches throughout gave evidence of a certain lack of harmony. But the Government's request suggested that, on its part, it had a bad conscience, and wished to avoid "revelations." As a consequence, every item of the management of the war was now called in question, and lack of common foresight was charged against ministers in every department concerned. On one point they had at the moment a fair answer to give; Sir William MacCormac and Mr Treves had just returned from an inspection of the hospitals in South Africa, and had said that, whatever else might be wrong, the hospital and medical service was excellent. Mr

Treves complained only, in a phrase that became famous, of "a plague of flies and a plague of women," the latter being half-trained, or even untrained, women who had managed to be sent out as nurses with various volunteer hospital corps, enrolled with more enthusiasm than judgment. But even this bright spot did not serve the Government long. These two surgeons might be great men; but the newspapers had had to replace the appallingly long casualty lists, happily things of the past, with extremely disturbing lists of cases of disease. This was evidence which rather undermined the rosy report; and in June the Government was being attacked for want of foresight and provision in this department no less than in the others. Mr Burdett-Coutts, who had spent some time in South Africa investigating the subject as special correspondent of *The Times*, wrote letters to that paper indicting the Government for insufficient staffing and equipment of the medical service; the field hospitals were all overworked, and there was no staff to spare for safeguarding the army by even the most elementary sanitary supervision. With considerable courage in the face of the anger and contemptuous speeches of his leaders in the House of Commons, where he sat as a Conservative member, Mr Burdett-Coutts continued his attack in that House, bringing out especially the fact that by the very nature of the service the men of the Army Medical Corps grew steadily out of touch with modern hospital practice and modern theories of health and sanitation. In the end he succeeded in securing the appointment of a Select Committee.

Yet all this criticism was not to be interpreted as a general change of mind on the subject of the war. A South Africa Conciliation Committee, which was founded with the object of securing at the earliest possible moment a cessation of hostilities, had much unpopularity to face. It was urging now that, as the Boers had been beaten

heavily at last, and driven not only from our colonies, but from some of their own territory, England might offer peace on condition that the Boer States disarmed, and surrendered all claim to control of their own foreign relations ; at the same time the Rand might be separated from the Transvaal, as the Diamond Fields had been separated from the Orange Free State. It was doubtful, to begin with, whether the Boers in the field would agree to such terms. Recent events had shown that they were still full of fight, and by no means overawed. At any rate, the war spirit in England would not hear of such suggestions. The less firmly established Liberal papers found salvation in them. Under the pressure of competition two Liberal penny papers, *The Daily News* and *The Daily Chronicle*, had first of all reduced their price to a halfpenny, and then, finding themselves still hard pressed, had largely waived their opposition to the war. It required deep conviction and a rich and courageous proprietorship to maintain, in the face of popular opinion, that the war need never have taken place. " Pro-Boer " was an ugly label, very readily attached. In Great Britain only three prominent newspapers stood unflinchingly by opposition to war, *The Manchester Guardian*, *The Morning Leader* and *The Star*. *The Daily Chronicle* practically went with the popular tide ; *The Daily News* clutched at the programme of the Conciliation Committee, and so just saved its Liberalism. The newspapers which held out unyielding against the war clamour owed their survival to the fact that each had made itself more or less indispensable to a particular public. *The Manchester Guardian* had built up a service of commercial news which the cotton trade could not dispense with. The morning trains and trams in Lancashire were full of men who expressed their attitude by crumpling the paper into a ball and throwing it away ostentatiously, when they had read the telegrams from New York, Galveston and New Orleans.

The Morning Leader and *The Star* had made for themselves a position as the workman's newspapers ; and it was some time before the workman got out of his habit of so regarding them. They had nothing to gain by their policy, for the workmen as a whole did not in the matter of the war adhere to Radicalism. Denunciations of the war as a capitalist war, as a spending of the common soldiers' blood and a diversion of the country's resources for the object of securing the gold companies on the Rand, had not succeeded in keeping organised Labour aloof from the rest of the community. At the Trade Union Congress later in the year there were bitter comments on the easy jingoism of the workman, and his readiness to share in breaking up peace meetings. At the same time it must be said that, on the death of a Liberal member of Parliament for Portsmouth in April, the seat was held successfully by the Liberal candidate. Liberalism had not yet passed into its most unpopular period. It was neither attacking, nor being attacked, with the sharpness that developed later on, as the result of changed conditions in the war.

The kind of feeling which might, in clever hands, be turned heavily against any sort of criticism of the war became manifest one night in May. In that month there were two great popular demonstrations. The first, which revealed no special cause for comment, was on the return of the naval brigade which had served in Ladysmith through the siege. Sir George White had just come home, and had been the honoured guest of the Queen at Windsor ; but he had avoided hero-worship ; and it all fell upon the sailors when they appeared in London, dragging some of the famous guns of the siege, and marched to lunch at the Admiralty and on through the City to tea at Lloyd's. Immense crowds gathered, but the day left no afterthoughts as to their behaviour. It was otherwise with the second demonstration, which added to the language a word

not of wholly satisfactory content. On 18th May the news of the relief of Mafeking reached London, and though it arrived late in the evening it spread everywhere. The result was amazing; an uninformed stranger might have thought that the whole war had depended on this news. Although the announcement was not made until nine o'clock at night an enormous crowd was soon parading the principal streets of the City and the West End. There had, indeed, been some expectation of the news, and for several nights many people had lingered near the War Office, the Mansion House, and the newspaper offices in Fleet Street, on the chance of an announcement. But when it was made the crowd swelled as if by magic. The extraordinary thing was that here was no celebration of a day arranged in advance, so that people might be expected to come in from the suburbs. The masses of people appeared to spring from the pavements. Within half-an-hour the great space before the Mansion House was packed solid, Fleet Street, the Strand and Pall Mall, Regent Street, Piccadilly and Oxford Circus were black with torrents of humanity, in which the wheeled traffic gave up any attempt to move. At every theatre and music hall the news was announced from the stage; at the Lyceum even Madame Duse's spell was broken to allow the reading of the telegram, and the singing of "God Save the Queen." Out in the suburbs early sleepers were awakened by outbursts of cheers; men came down by train from the seething centre of London, and rode off in cabs, shouting the news along the quiet roads of villas. Liverpool was alive with parading crowds; Newcastle was startled by the explosion and flare of rockets; Birmingham spread the news like wildfire from its theatres; the brass band of the volunteers roused the streets of York; Glasgow illuminated its municipal buildings; Leicester and Brighton swarmed with madly cheering people, the Yorkshire dales reverberated with the sound of strangely

blown mill and factory sirens. The next day was a Saturday, and no one pretended to do even the customary half-day's work.

The spontaneity of the demonstrations could hardly be denied; they took every reflective person by surprise. But it was not altogether satisfactory surprise. People began to ask themselves, and continued to ask for some time, whether the British character was revealing in such demonstrations signs of profound change, whether we were growing unbalanced, whether, now that there had been symptoms of hysteria in rejoicing, we ought not to confess that there had been some hysteria in our depression at the end of the past year. In short, if we showed lack of self-control, were we ceasing to be capable of rule? Were we pursuing this war in the real determination of a conquering race, or were we deceiving ourselves with a merely spasmodic imitation of it, derived from alternations of wounded and gratified pride? The real change was probably less in the popular manifestations of feeling than in the Imperial self-consciousness thus opposed to them. The nation revealed in Gillray's cartoons of the Napoleonic period, the nation which wrapped itself in the splendour of Alma and Balaclava while it left to a single woman the care of its wounded and to a single newspaper correspondent decent foresight for the strength and health of men in the trenches, was after all much the same impressionable, stupid, successful nation which was now under diagnosis. The habit of quick and easy communication made its qualities appear more intensely; but that was all. On the other hand it had never dawned upon Gillray that we were a nation of masters. The Imperial spirit, which the commentators on Mafeking night perceived as dimly threatened by such unbridled enthusiasm, was a modern invention. In so far as it had any real existence as a corporate emotion, it was probably more unhealthy than the "mafficking" spirit, which, so far as there is any

genuine Psychology of Crowds, presented perfectly normal aspects.

"Mafficking" went on for some days. The street hawkers, by the alertness of the Jews who supply their stock-in-trade, helped to maintain it by providing the drifting groups in the streets of an evening with peacocks' feathers, "squeakers," little flags, and other such trophies. Why the relief of Mafeking, more than that of Ladysmith, more than the success at Paardeberg or the occupation of Bloemfontein, should have let loose all this hilarity, it would be difficult to say. For one thing, it was a neat rounding-off of the picture which the ordinary public had drawn for itself of the task before us; it appeared to complete the happier turn of the tide. Secondly, it coincided with what already looked like a triumphant close to the whole second chapter of the war; Lord Roberts had started north from Bloemfontein on 10th May, had driven the Boers from Kronstadt on 12th May, and we knew that the advance to Pretoria had begun. Methuen was moving up from the west, after a neat little engagement in which some of his volunteer mounted infantry had captured near Boshof a small Boer commando under a French colonel, de Villebois Mareuil, who was killed; Buller was moving up the narrow northern neck of Natal, driving Boers from one position after another by outflanking movements. Third, and by no means least, the defence of Mafeking was exactly of the kind to stir the ordinary man's blood; and it may have been obscurely felt that we owed some singular meed of appreciation to a defence which our main military dispositions had appeared rather to leave to look after itself. There was gallantry in all that England heard of the story. Colonel Baden-Powell had not only managed with wonderful economy and resourcefulness the fighting force of the town (here, more wonderfully than at Kimberley, since the materials were far poorer, a large gun had been constructed, and

shells made for it); but he had organised dances and cricket matches, sung at concerts, and descended at other intervals from his watch-tower to go scouting by night towards the Boer lines with a craft learned in earlier years from the Zulus and the Matabele. Lastly, the defence of Mafeking had this special appeal to the imagination—that it was, so to speak, almost an impromptu civilian defence, and therefore might be taken to prove that muddling or inefficiency in high places was not symptomatic of a general decay. There was penetration in the comments of *The Times*, which offered, as one explanation of the amazing expression of popular emotion, that "it was instinctively felt that at Mafeking we have the common man of the Empire, the fundamental stuff of which it is built, with his back to the wall . . . and at the long last coming out, proud, tenacious, unconquered, and unconquerable," a glimpse of "the fundamental grit of the breed." [1] At the very last the defence had covered itself with glory. An attack delivered by the Boers penetrated well into the town, but was so neatly and swiftly answered that the attackers, cut off from their supports and pinned for a whole day to the dangerous ground they had gained, surrendered in the end, a batch of 120 prisoners. If, as has been said, neither side had anything strategic to gain at Mafeking, the stout defence had for seven months kept 2000 of the enemy and one of their big Creusot guns from reinforcing the Boers elsewhere.

The Mafeking celebrations should probably have caused less concern to the acute observer inclined to be critical than the subsequent slackening of interest in the war. Lord Roberts, rendering various Boer positions untenable by means of wide turning movements, crossed the Vaal River on 27th May and, hardly delayed by the action of Doornkop, was at Johannesburg on 30th May. On the

[1] *The Times*, 20th May 1900.

previous day he had issued the proclamation annexing the Orange Free State. Yet it is on record that the newspaper placards in London on the 30th were devoted to Epsom and not to Johannesburg.[1] This slackening of interest was surely a more serious sign of superficiality in the popular mind than the recent jubilations had been. The Boers were unable to stand at any point, it was known on 31st May that Kruger had fled from Pretoria, the mines of the Rand were safe; and even writers usually judicious were saying that "threats of an obstinate guerilla war need not be regarded seriously."[2] Pretoria was occupied on 5th June, a mere fringe of Boer riflemen having to be swept away from before it, and a day later over 3000 British prisoners had been released. But the effect of the sudden decline of interest (although of course the actual occupation of Pretoria had been acclaimed) was seen in the irritation and resentment aroused by news of continued fighting in what was now the Orange River Colony. Lord Roberts, deciding to move on Pretoria, had been quite conscious of the Boer forces left in the eastward portion of the colony. The public at home, tiring in its easy way of details, had not taken into account the true state of affairs; and when it found that guerilla war after all had to be taken seriously it began to call for strong measures. Throughout the month of June, England learned by painful experience the name of another Boer leader, De Wet. Flying raids upon the railway, with constant cuttings of the line and blowing up of trains, sudden descents upon isolated bodies of troops and convoys on the march, had a double seriousness. They not only provided the elusive commandos with stores, ammunition and rifles; but they encouraged resistance elsewhere, and prevented the feeling that any district was really subdued. It began to be

[1] Sir Wemyss Reid, in *The Nineteenth Century*, July 1900.
[2] *The Times*, 31st May 1900.

more than suspected that Boers who had given in their submission were swept again into the fighting ranks by the passing of De Wet's force ; and that farms ostensibly peaceful had their ways of working with De Wet, by giving him supplies and information, if not acting as real bases. For the moment Lord Roberts had work of his own on hand. The main Boer forces under Louis Botha were too near Pretoria, lying about fifteen miles out at Pienaar's Poort. The British force was not the large one with which Roberts had first turned the tide of the war; he had had to leave a brigade at Johannesburg, and another on his line of communications, besides the troops he had left in the Orange River Colony operating under Methuen. But he succeeded in driving the Boers westward. Moving out from Pretoria on 11th June, he sent French against the right and Hamilton against the left of the Boer position. The fighting was sharp, and the City Imperial Volunteers, who were part of Hamilton's force, had their mettle tested as severely as any troops during the war in the grim task of hanging on to the ridge of Diamond Hill. But in the end the Boers found their position untenable, and moved eastwards down the line, relieving the pressure on Pretoria. Then attention was turned more steadily to De Wet. He had fairly startled people in England by almost capturing Lord Kitchener in one of his raids. Driven back from the railway, he was operating in the Bethlehem region, north-east of Bloemfontein, when a combined sweeping movement against him was organised between the forces of Ian Hamilton, Hunter, Macdonald and Clements. As the cordon drew tight towards the Basutoland border, De Wet, leaving the main body of Boers, made a dash with some 1500 men, and got through the English lines. Troops were detached in hot pursuit, but failed to catch him. The sweeping movement, however, went on until, at the end of July, Commandant Prinsloo

surrendered with about 4000 men. Although De Wet had escaped, these operations removed all possibility of danger to the Durban railway; and this was important, since it gave Lord Roberts in Pretoria a secure base for supplies twenty-four hours nearer to him than Cape Town. General Buller had before this passed, by a series of successful little engagements, the mountain barriers in the extreme north of Natal, and was in possession of Standerton, in the Transvaal, at the head of 20,000 men.

Record of the national attitude towards the war has now to take a new direction. To the public mind the occupation of Bloemfontein and Pretoria and the formal annexation of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal meant a far stage in the last chapter of the war. When, in August, Lord Roberts, having at length rehorsed his mounted troops, began a large movement eastwards, the end seemed close at hand. Buller moved up from Standerton, pushing Boer forces before him; Pole-Carew moved out along the Lourenço Marques line, and French moved parallel with him north of the line. Kruger, who had been living in a railway saloon carriage, ready to move instantly, at Machadodorp, fled across the frontier, after a few days' fighting around Machadodorp and Bergendal, at the beginning of September, had driven the Boers out of the strong positions there. Buller continued to push the disintegrated bands northward to Lydenburg, where he fought another battle on 8th September, still further disintegrating them. Hamilton and Pole-Carew drove other bands eastward, till, late in September, they had forced the fugitives across the frontier, had occupied Komatipoort, and had found there and at Hector Spruit, close by, the shattered remains of many of the treasured Boer guns, including three of the four big Creusots. The guns had been kept on the rail, to be hurried ever eastward as the pressure

increased. That they had now been abandoned and destroyed was a notable sign.

It was assumed in England that, by all the rules of such affairs, the war should now end. The Boer commanders, separated and driven from all important bases of operations, should have seen, it was supposed, that no hope remained to them of regaining their country, and should therefore have surrendered. That they did not do so had the result of exasperating party spirit in England to a degree far beyond anything yet reached. On the one hand, the Conciliation Committee was urgent that, now the Boer republics were irrevocably annexed, we should not lay on ourselves the burden, and on the Boer people the humiliation, of driving the war to the point of absolute forcible submission to our arms; but should endeavour to offer them some kind of future position in their old lands which might induce them to accept our supremacy. The idea of bargaining with them was inherent in this advice. On the other hand, the greater part of the nation, irritated that all was not over when the conditions were formally those of conquest, refused to offer a bargain at all. If the Boers thought, by holding out in their difficult mountainous regions, and carrying on guerilla war, to weary us into waiving any part of the formal situation, they should learn that they were wrong. If they would not surrender by the rules, they should be not only vanquished, but thrashed. Hence proceeded a state of feeling which led to still further exasperation. Lord Roberts was urged to enter upon a course of much greater severity towards those suspected of helping the Boer forces after taking oaths of allegiance. It was held to be clear that men operating without bases of supplies or lines of communication must be drawing maintenance from farms nominally at peace with us. It was also held to be clear, from the comparative impunity with which the guerillas managed their raids, that they had sources

of intelligence which could only be found in those same farms. Instances began to be known of rifles and ammunition found secreted in homes which had in their possession the passes given by British generals to Boers taking the oath. It was agreed that leniency to the farms was from every point of view a mistake, and would only prolong the war. During the autumn greater severity was in fact at work. Farms proved to be in co-operation with Boer forces in the field were burned. But this on the other hand roused the Conciliation Committee to a more strenuous activity. This kind of punishment must always, they argued, be difficult to administer justly; it must be watched jealously. And, on the broader lines, did not England see now on what a course the determination to beat the Boers to their knees had embarked her? When the end came, we should have in South Africa not merely people whom we had beaten in war, but people rendered sullen by the destruction of homes and the desolation of their families. Controversy in England began to take an embittered tone. Those who were for the maintenance and the increase of strong measures chafed also under the obviously growing expense caused by the prolongation of war. Those who lamented the resolution to come to no terms with an enemy feared lest the exasperation of the other side might grow into a spirit almost savage. The struggle began, as the autumn drew on, to gather to itself all the normal opposition between political parties. Throughout the session Liberal opinion had shown no decided front. Even in late July, in a division following a debate on South Africa, only thirty-one Liberals had voted against the Government. Forty had voted with the Government, and the leader, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, with thirty-five more, had avoided voting at all. Radical views had their champion, not in the party leader, but in Mr Lloyd George, who, when the session was over, had made for

himself the beginning of a new reputation as the most persistent and prominent in attacks upon Mr Chamberlain for his whole South African policy. But another effect of the close of the session was that speculation turned vigorously to the possibility of a dissolution of Parliament. It had for some time been thought that Mr Chamberlain, true to his constant skill with electoral machinery, felt the moment ripe for a general election. If the war were to be prolonged, public opinion might revert too strongly to the recollection of the Government's original failures of foresight, and might revenge itself upon ministers by turning them out of office. But that would be most likely to happen if the dissolution were delayed until even a prolonged war must be over, or nearly over. At the moment the Government could urge that it required strength for the final effort, could appeal to the country to give it a firm basis from which to conclude a nearly concluded task. But a year hence affairs might well be in a condition in which no such appeal could be made. It was believed that these views did not commend themselves to the rest of the Cabinet [1]; but a certain tendency on Mr Chamberlain's part to overcolour his case had a campaigning appearance. This became more obvious after the House rose. The development of the farm-burning controversy was exactly what a Conservative party agent might have hoped for. Being, as it were, not a direct indictment of the whole origin of the war, but a distinct question of its continuance, it attracted those Liberals who had not been able to take the most outspoken view in the early days. Many more, who might still have hesitated, were driven into a defence of the Liberal position by Mr Chamberlain's round accusation of the Liberals as traitors. In rebutting that rather sweeping classification, Liberals were obliged to define their own position; and as that

[1] Sir Wemyss Reid, in *The Nineteenth Century*, July 1900.

involved criticism of what was going on, and to some extent of what had led to it, the whole affair became more and more a party question. The last stroke was the notorious "crystallising" of the position by a candidate named Wanklyn, in the phrase "a vote given to the Liberals is a vote given to the Boers." The Boer leaders still in the field were believed to be holding out mainly in the hope of intervention which would secure them some conciliatory terms; a delegation was in the United States in May, and Kruger was expected to come to Europe to appeal to the Continental powers.

Parliament was dissolved on 25th September. A paucity of candidates on the Liberal side showed how deep exasperation had already gone. Within a fortnight the great boroughs had made it plain that the election was to be an abnormal one; by 6th October the returns stood at 300 Unionists to 80 Liberals. The counties proved no safer ground for the Liberals, and by the end of the month, even Orkney turning Unionist, the new Parliament was complete, consisting of 402 Unionists, 186 Liberals, and 82 Nationalists, a Unionist majority of 134. Scotland for the first time had returned more Unionists than Liberals (though the difference was only two); Wales remained stauncher to her traditions, and returned 22 more Liberals than Unionists; for this Mr Lloyd George was largely responsible, and his reputation was now made.

To the "Khaki Election," as it came to be called, neither side would look back a few years later with much pride. There were many Conservatives who disliked an appeal to the country in the midst of a war,—felt it to be on the one hand an almost sentimental appeal for support, and on the other hand a not very sporting advantage taken of the Opposition. Moreover, it inevitably tended to a personal glorification of Mr Chamberlain; and his methods, his wholesale branding of people honestly

opposed to him, his crude excursions into international politics,[1] the somewhat dictatorial tone that crept even into his relations with the colonies were still too much the methods of his old Radical days to commend themselves to his new party. An election focussed on a war resulting from a policy he had directed must bring him within appreciable distance of the premiership; and Conservatives shrank from that prospect. On the Liberal side the election meant a hopeless blurring of their position. Whatever they might wish to say in regard to milder counsels, and hastening the end of the war by conciliatory proposals, was swamped in the general charge against them of abetting the enemy. Liberal argument weakened into personal attacks on Mr Chamberlain, however little many individuals wished to take this line. Nor had there been among Liberals that unity of feeling and purpose which might have given them the consolation of a party, even if sadly diminished, at any rate more united than it had been for six years past. Some still attacked the war, root and branch; some attacked only the recent developments; others declined to criticise it at all. Although analysis of the polls after the election showed that, in spite of the large Conservative majority in the House, the country itself was not nearly so unevenly divided, little could be deduced from this, because of the varying standpoints occupied by Liberal candidates.

Hopes of conciliation seemed at the end of the year to be at low-water mark. All the efforts in that direction had apparently only strengthened the determination to reduce the Boers to absolute surrender. They had certainly roused against them a spirit which even the most convinced supporters of the war could not welcome. A roughness and violence crept into popular demonstrations, and was at its height when the return of the City Imperial Volunteers in October gave it an opportunity to reveal

[1] See page 70.

itself. So enormous was the crowd in the streets, and so impatient of control, that it was four hours after the arrival of the regiment at Paddington before the last man had entered St Paul's for the thanksgiving service. The crowd in Ludgate Circus was so undisciplined that two people were crushed to death. Subsequent comments on "hooliganism" (then a new word) showed that there could be no shutting the eyes to extremely undesirable elements in the freshened war spirit. True, this could be in part attributed to lack of wisdom in the advocacy of conciliation. This same form of recrimination was not lacking in the House of Commons. Any criticism of the conduct of events in South Africa was denounced as "shameless accusation" of the troops in the field.[1] The Government may well have had no patience to spare. It was faced with another prospect of active war expenditure, and the revenue, as was inevitable in war time, was shrinking; the returns for the first quarter of the new financial year showed a diminution (chiefly in customs and excise, owing to the large advance clearances [2]) of one and a quarter millions. Industries were checked by the draining off of men, and by a rise in the price of coal. In the circumstances the necessity for more money was met by voting a comparatively small loan, one of sixteen millions, and endowing the Chancellor of the Exchequer with further borrowing powers not immediately put in force.

A certain uneasiness in the Government, a desire to present the best aspect of their case, may be seen in the attempt at this time to make light of the remainder of the war. To help in producing the impression that for all practical purposes the war was over, they appointed Lord Roberts Commander-in-Chief at home, published a glowing tribute from him to his troops in South Africa, which had

[1] *The Times*, 20th December 1900.

[2] See page 84.

all the effect of winding up the serious business, and allowed him to hand over the command in the field to Lord Kitchener. Round Lord Roberts had gathered all the hope and confidence in the war; his return could not but be taken to mean that little was left to do. General Buller had already come home, and was in England by the middle of November. Lord Roberts left Johannesburg for the homeward journey on 1st December. In their anxiety to keep criticism at bay, ministers rather overreached themselves. A great thanksgiving service at St Paul's on the day of Lord Roberts's return had been arranged. But just before he reached England the War Office was compelled to cancel the arrangements. It was too obvious that the war was not ended.

Certain incidents elsewhere probably fostered the hope that the scattered commandos would not hold out for long. If they were looking for intervention, it had become abundantly clear that they were looking in vain. On 22nd November Kruger landed, a fugitive, at Marseilles. Rumour credited him with having come not unprovided with money to plead his cause. Yet his position was hardly for a week in doubt. He was known to base his hopes on Germany, from which country at the time of the Jameson Raid he had received a famous telegram expressing interest in the independence of his territory.[1] For a day or two opinion in England wavered as to his chances in that direction. The Kaiser's visit to the Queen a year earlier could not be held to be altogether definitive as to his attitude, since the German Press had shown a steady bias against the war, expressed at times in strong language; it was possible that the Kaiser might feel himself overborne by the public opinion of his country. On 4th December all doubts were at an end, and it was known that he had refused to give Kruger an audience. The popular sympathy in France and Holland, with which

[1] See vol. i., p. 386.

the exile had to be content, might be vexatious to England; but the reflection that, as it carried no faintest possibility of a diversion of the course of events, it might, in a different way, be quite as vexatious to Kruger himself tended to square the account.

CHAPTER VI

1900: THE CRY FOR EFFICIENCY

IF, as seems to be certain, the dissolution of 1900 was largely forced upon his colleagues by Mr Chamberlain, it must in fairness be allowed that the promise of victory in an election during the war was probably only one of the considerations in his mind. In the end, no doubt, it became the paramount one. But to a man of his energy, his ideas, and his capacity for work, the condition of the House of Commons in the session of 1900 must have offered a great temptation to sweep away this Parliament, and put another in its place. Inertia enveloped it; and when the war obliterated all other concerns it grew even more inert. It took no interest in the small programme of work set before it; the House was constantly counted out at an early hour of the evening. Parliamentary government seemed to have reached a state of collapse. There were some who discerned in this fact deeper and more lasting influences than that of the war. They recalled a warning from Disraeli that extension of the franchise must diminish the real power of Parliament, since the executive would come to rely less upon Parliament than upon the electorate; the true centre of Government would shift to the Cabinet and the permanent departments.[1] But as in war the executive must always be more independent than in peace, any subtle or far-reaching explanations of the slackness of the Commons might be left on one side. Yet the fact remained that here was a House in a thoroughly

[1] See an article, by Mrs J. R. Green, in *The Nineteenth Century*, June 1900.

unsatisfactory condition. It was true that there was no immediate danger to the Ministry. The complete change of fortune in the war meant that even strong criticism of the Government would not seriously shake its stability. The Opposition was fundamentally disorganised; and although at the beginning of the year the long-standing breach in the Irish party was healed, and Parnellites and Anti-Parnellites united once more as Irish Nationalists under the leadership of Mr John Redmond, they could not be formidable to the Government except in conjunction with a vigorous Liberal party. Moreover the Liberal leaders had in some cases so far recanted their alliance with the Irish that the likelihood of united action between the two parties hardly needed to be taken into account.[1]

But though for the present year the Government had no cause to be fearful, Mr Chamberlain was too far-sighted to be content. He could not but be aware that the ensuing year would present grave difficulties. A long-drawn, dragging tail to the war would strain the Exchequer and weary the national temper. At the same time blunders and shortcomings in the management of it, a hundred flaws in our administrative system revealed by the violent pressure of the war, would be charged upon a Government then no longer able to plead that it must be left unhampered on account of the peril of the moment. The existing Ministerial party could not be trusted, even in the face of a weak Opposition, to pull the Government through such a year as must lie ahead. Party dissensions of the kind that existed among the Liberals have a way of healing for some immediately profitable purpose. The obvious policy, therefore, was to dissolve, and provide against the difficulties by creating a new majority full of the enthusiasm of a fresh victory. Nor was this all. To pull through the

[1] See vol. i., p. 349; ii., p. 12, and *The Times*, 7th February 1900.

rest of the war, and the period of criticism and investigation, would still leave the party rather meagrely provisioned for a future appeal to the country. There must be an energetic House ready to enter upon social legislation when the war and its accompaniments were past. Had not the opportunity arrived to make Liberal Unionism the equal colleague, and no longer the mere ally, of Conservatism? Hitherto, as we have seen, social legislation undertaken on that side had been, since 1886, liable to be regarded rather askance by Conservatives.[1] Was not the time, with Mr Chamberlain's personal predominance, ripe for putting an end to the comments that this or that social measure was part of the price paid by Lord Salisbury to Mr Chamberlain, and to make Liberal Unionism, with its programme of social change, an integral portion of a practically new party, and not a mere section of a coalition?

Such motives as these may at any rate be taken into account in considering the dissolution. Slack and ineffective as the session was, two measures mentioned in the Queen's Speech were carried. The Moneylenders Act obliged the registration of names in which such businesses were carried on, and empowered judges to deal drastically with claims brought before them in which exorbitant interest was exacted. The Companies Act dealt with bogus qualification of directors, especially by the gift of paid-up shares (thus striking a blow at the "guinea-pig" director, who, on insufficient examination, lent a well-known name and so helped to decoy the public), and also prescribed the minimum amount of subscription of shares on which a board might proceed to allotment. A Housing of the Working Classes Act should also be mentioned; it enabled local authorities to erect dwellings outside the area of their own jurisdiction, thus giving them the opportunity to build at less cost, and to avoid congestion.[2]

[1] See vol. i., pp. 229, 411.
[2] See p. 36.

Another piece of work during the session was the setting up of a Joint Committee on Municipal Trading. In this matter the House was acting slightly ahead of public opinion. There had been as yet no very widespread discussion of the subject; only two hundred members voted on the motion to set up the committee.[1] But feeling, if not widespread, was strong on both sides. The immense field of capital placed at the disposal of municipalities by the invention of the funded municipal debt had led to all sorts of enterprise on the part of the authorities of large and progressive towns. In consequence rates had risen, and thus there was an interested public backing for the arguments, whether of academic individualists, or of private traders in such undertakings as electric light supply, tram companies, omnibus companies, etc., against the socialistic tendency inherent in the provision of such services by public authorities. At this moment, indeed, the socialists themselves were criticising municipal trading; a socialist conference in Glasgow in April gave expression to the view that considerations of public health were falling into the background, and too much attention being paid to services of convenience and remunerative undertakings; the city in which they were meeting had an enormous debt, and some of its public provisions, such as its cheap dwellings, were a magnet to a rather worthless population.[2] Later in the year a Local Government Board report had something of the same kind to say: it called attention to cases of incompetence on the part of local authorities in matters of insanitary housing and polluted water-supplies, which had recently, for instance, caused the gravest outbreaks of disease at Camborne and Carnarvon. It happened also that in London the County Council had sustained a rebuff in the report of the London Water Commission, which,

[1] The figures were 141 for the motion, 67 against.

[2] *The Times*, 21st April 1900.

recommending the purchase of the undertakings of the various companies, and their union under a public authority, advised that this authority should not be the County Council, but a separate body, permanent and independent. If, however, the opposition to municipal trading had become more fundamental during the last fifteen years,[1] such trading did not lack defenders; and, though the House which discussed the matter was small, the debate was keen.

Public interest was yet to be aroused. But a discussion at the Church Congress of this year reveals to what an extent municipal activity had stirred the conscience. Some of the clergy frankly confessed themselves in a dilemma; if they told the truth about all the housing scandals that came to their notice, their poorest people, in fear of being turned out of their dwellings by compulsory closing orders, would shut doors in their faces. Nor would local authorities, being dependent on popular election, dare to put in force all the powers they had.[2] There was naturally at this congress some discussion of the attitude of the Church towards the war. It must be said that no definite attitude was to be discerned. Religious views, like extreme democratic views, proved to have no peculiar power of keeping those who professed them recognisable by any marked classification. The truism that war was sometimes necessary as the price of peace, which provided the main shelter for the clergy, cannot be said to have done the Church much honour. The Free Churches endeavoured to maintain that Christianity was a gospel of peace rather more courageously than the Church of England; but in them also the war appeared to obscure general principles. It is more satisfactory, in the case of the Church of England, to turn to indications of a greater readiness to heal her own vexations. Three ritual prosecutions were pending

[1] See vol. i., p. 140.

[2] *The Times*, 2nd October 1900.

in the latter part of the year. But there was a growing desire to avoid such proceedings, and to leave extremists to consider their ways. The Bishop of London displayed his own belief in the possibilities of toleration by gathering at Fulham a Round Table Conference on the Doctrine of the Holy Communion and its expression in ritual. Men of such widely differing views as Lord Halifax and Dr Wace met thus at the same conference; and, if no new formulas appeared, yet a sense emerged that men might differ peaceably; and the practical effect was seen in the quiet stopping of the three prosecutions by the bishop's veto.

There occurred early in the year an event which called attention in England to the fact that the Anglican Church was not the only one to suffer from the pressure of modern thought towards expansion of its formularies. The death of Dr St George Mivart in April followed painfully soon upon the announcement that he had been forbidden the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. He was a great scientist, great enough to cross swords with Darwin on the subject of natural selection; Dr Mivart maintained the opinion that human intelligence differed not merely in degree, but in kind, from the intelligence of other vertebrates. In certain articles published in *The Nineteenth Century* and *The Fortnightly Review* on "The Continuity of Catholicism," he was held by the Vatican to have pitted human reason against the authority of the Church, and he was therefore excommunicated. This may be said to have been the first occasion on which public opinion in this country was at all moved about those tendencies in the Roman Church which presently came to be classed as "modernist." The general view that it was rather shocking to see a man of notably good and earnest life debarred from the consolations of his Church had, no doubt, something sentimental in it. A good deal of that quality was rife in a year in which an American religious novel

called *In His Steps* had a great vogue. It may be added here that the religious community furthest removed from any such tendency, the Unitarians, lost in January of this year a notable leader by the death of Dr Martineau. His intellectual power and clarity of ideals had won for him a following as passionately attached as an unbendingly logical body could permit.

In the same month John Ruskin died. Burial in Westminster Abbey was offered, but his representatives declined it, and he was buried in his beloved Lake Country. At the moment it seemed that much for which he had contended so hotly, even so pugnaciously, was lost. Industrialism had created hideous towns all over England; railways had scored the face of the country. The time had hardly yet come for perceiving that views of his which went deeper than the mere external aspects of commercialism were not lost. A few years later Liberalism, revived and strengthened, was putting into practice economic theories which, when Ruskin propounded them, were dismissed as even more impracticably idealist than his desire to stop destruction of scenery. He had pleaded so mightily for hills and valleys, for gardens and houses, over which the torrent of industrialism was pouring, that men had forgotten his pleadings for the people caught in the same torrent. He himself, aged and disappointed, could not detect the indications that the spirit of his protests was already at work in the new conditions. But there was a growing demand for some respect on the part of public authorities for canons of beauty in building. It could be discerned in this year, for instance, in the newspaper correspondence about the new road which was being driven from the Strand to Holborn. Holywell Street, Wych Street and the rookeries of Clare Market had been cleared in the course of the great street improvement undertaken by the London County Council. Here, said the critics, was a noble opportunity for street designing;

and the council was besought to lay down a general design, and stipulate that lessees of sites should adhere to it in their buildings. A favourite plan was that of Sir Frederick Bramwell, for building on the model of the Rows, at Chester, with covered arcades on the street level and on the first-floor level. In the same spirit the plans for a new Central Criminal Court were scrutinised; nay, even the determination to demolish Newgate was called in question. Taste had swung so far from the mere appreciation of prettiness in architecture, current twenty years earlier,[1] that the grim solidity, the blank dignity, of the old prison were felt to be a possession. An opportunity for a more obvious prodding of official callousness to considerations of art was provided by the very narrow escape of the National Gallery in June. A fire broke out on premises at the western end of the gallery, and people suddenly awoke to the fact that, not only was the gallery not isolated from buildings in ordinary use, with all the dangers of artificial light and heating, but that no supervision whatever was exercised over those buildings; a flimsy structure with a tarred-felt roof had actually been put upon the top of the house next to the gallery. Fortunately the stupidity was so flagrant that steps were at once taken to destroy adjoining buildings, and isolate the gallery. In two specific matters the year 1900 marked itself as belonging to a new time in art. Firstly, the era of enormous prices for old masters was opening; at the sale of the Peel heirlooms in May (the sequel to an interesting case which had tested the power of the law to permit the dispersal of heirlooms), two Vandyck portraits fetched £24,250. Secondly, at the exhibition of the New English Art Club, in April, the work of a new-comer, William Orpen, was the first-fruits of a group at the Slade School bringing a fresh combativeness to bear upon the slow-moving British taste. Between these two movements,—the incursion into the market

[1] See vol. i., p. 63.

of certain wealthy Americans, who frankly, not pretending to knowledge of art, aimed at the safety of old masters, and the strong backing of the young painters in England by a young generation of art critics—the day of high prices for Royal Academicians was over.

In other arts there was also a stirring of dry bones. Theatrical managers, long accustomed to the public's meek acceptance of their rather stale fare, were perturbed by signs of impatience in gallery and pit. The newspapers late in the year contained long discussions on the propriety or impropriety of " booing " plays. Certainly there must have been a new kind of theatrical public when Mr Bernard Shaw could have a play staged in the ordinary course of commercial speculation; *You Never Can Tell* was produced in May. The dancing of Miss Isadora Duncan, on the other hand, though very favourably noticed, was rather ahead of its time. She appeared in London in March; but there was no real interest in dancing as an art, and she did not aim at the sensational.

It is interesting that a year in which so much of the nation's energy and attention was concentrated on South Africa should show fewer dull moments than many years in which there was no such distraction. Thus the failure of interest in Lord Roberts's position at Pretoria during the month of June was partly due to the sudden development of an alarming situation in China. Some kind of popular rising, very imperfectly understood, but clearly involving danger to foreign residents, had spread with such rapidity that Pekin itself was threatened. The rebels were known by a name translated into English as " the Boxers," and their hostility to the Government in China seemed to be a popular expression of resentment of the recent acquisitions of Chinese territory by European powers after the war between China and Japan.[1] It was suspected of being less distressing to the Chinese authorities than a

[1] See p. 47.

popular rising should have been. By the beginning of July the alarm was in full blast. The German minister to China had been killed; and the European population in Pekin was concentrated in the houses and grounds of three legations, which were under siege. It was hardly hoped that against a horde of Chinese the legations, walled enclosures though they were, could long be defended. News was extremely difficult to obtain, and such rumours as came through were of the gloomiest. It was persistently reported that all Europeans in Pekin had been massacred; and at last, on 16th July, *The Daily Mail* published a telegram giving in some detail an account of the fall of the legations, and the slaughter of the defenders. Luckily the prevalence of rumours before this caused some suspension of judgment about the telegram. Its details had a certain precision, but after all it did not come from any source closer to Pekin than that of the other rumours. Hope, therefore, revived again. Meanwhile from the European fleets in the China Seas an allied force had been hastily put together, and marched upon Pekin. It met with little actual resistance, and on 19th August it formally occupied Pekin, the Chinese Court fleeing inland to the mountains. The Europeans who had found refuge in the besieged legations were alive, though they had passed days of the severest trial of their fortitude. Thus European eyes looked at last on the famous Imperial City, its palaces and immense walled domains; and a complete era seemed to close at the tramp of European feet upon that long-forbidden ground. In the days of alarm a great deal of agitated opinion had foreseen the whole Chinese race descending upon Europe, and the thought that it numbered four hundred millions of human beings became a nightmare. The German Emperor, who had already expressed himself somewhat picturesquely on the exaction of retribution for murder of his subjects in China,[1]

[1] See vol. i., p. 430.

now lent himself to the agitation about "The Yellow Peril" by painting a picture, reproduced far and wide, in which allegorical figures of the European powers, headed by Germany, cross in hand, confronted a heavy cloud advancing from the East, in the murky folds of which was a savage Chinese visage of colossal size.

The Londoner this year was provided with a novelty to which he took readily, perceiving it to be the forerunner of great changes in his methods of locomotion. It was a new underground railway, worked by electricity, clean, free of all steam and smoke, and swift. But it had other aspects which endeared it to a people fond of being managed and saved trouble. The old ticket system was to be replaced by a system of paying the same fare, twopence, however far you wanted to ride. Thus there was no need to keep a ticket to be given up at the journey's end. As soon as you bought it, you passed a barrier where you gave it up; and then you were dropped in a lift, shot through a tunnel in long pleasant carriages not divided into compartments, and carried up again in a lift wherever you wished to be disgorged. The rapidity with which "the twopenny tube" received its nickname demonstrated its popularity. Meanwhile the motor car which was in the end to revolutionise omnibus traffic, and so save Londoners from becoming a race as devoted to burrows as rabbits, was still making headway against prejudice. It was less obviously a subject for jesting, but cars were made in queer, blunt shapes, due to the dominance of old ideas of a carriage, and the failure to arrive at lines which should express the new vehicle's power and ease. The extraordinary survival of prejudice had been seen in the previous year, when Mr Scott Montagu,[1] one of the staunch pioneers of motoring, was forbidden by the police on duty in New Palace Yard to enter the precincts of the House in a car. Motor cycles were a novelty at the

[1] Now Lord Montagu of Beaulieu.

cycle show in 1899, and in 1900 a thousand miles' trial of the new machines advertised their soundness and practicability.

Another striking advertisement was that of the astonishing power of turbine marine engines.[1] A torpedo-boat destroyer, the *Viper*, had been equipped with them; and on a three hours' steaming trial she had made the unheard-of mean speed of 33½ knots an hour.[2]

Even archæology entered into the moving current of the year. Mr Arthur Evans and Mr D. G. Hogarth had been excavating in Crete; and what they had discovered already was enough to cause them to issue a special appeal for funds, and to rouse unusual interest. They found themselves on the tracks of a very early civilisation, which seemed likely to prove the link between that of Greece and those of Asia and Egypt. But as yet learned opinion concluded that discovery of the palace of King Minos[3] himself could not be hoped for. The excavators probably had a more shrewd idea of the marvels that were to come, and the near touch they were to establish not only with Minos, but even with the Minotaur.

Towards the end of the year all the dissatisfaction with the conduct of the war, all the exposures of incompetence in this or that branch of the War Office, all the display of lack of cohesion and co-operation between the great departments of state, and all the discussion of the education and fitness for command of English officers, produced a sweeping outcry for efficiency in administration. There had long been scattered attempts, even before the war, to stir public opinion in this direction. Now far greater force had been given to the charge that we were being inefficiently governed; and a platform was provided by the pages of *The Nineteenth Century*. The editor printed

[1] See p. 26.
[2] *The Times*, 26th October 1900.
[3] *Ibid.*, 5th November 1900.

in very large type a proposal to found an Administrative Reform Association; and was able to back his proposal with list after list of names of important people who lent their support to it. That the country's business should be conducted on ordinary business principles sounded a straightforward suggestion; a merchant whose enterprises were as scramblingly undertaken as this war had been would land himself in the Bankruptcy Court in a month. The outcry cannot be said to have had any immediate effect. The new Cabinet after the general election showed no particular sense of a need for new methods. Its critics called it "a Cabinet of Commonplace." [1] Lord Lansdowne, who had been Secretary for War, and so the target of incessant complaint, went to the Foreign Office in place of Lord Salisbury, and was pilloried in cartoons dressed in clothes much too big for him. Mr St John Brodrick went to the War Office in his place; and there was irritated comment on this appointment of a man who had made no distinct reputation to a department upon which the interest of the country was focussed. Lord Selborne at the Admiralty, like Lord Lansdowne at the Foreign Office, was destined to achieve good work; but at the moment it did not seem to be an inspiring appointment. Worst of all, in the midst of a demand for business men, was the appointment of Mr Gerald Balfour to the Board of Trade; a scholarly, cultured man, he can have had little sympathy, and less contact, with the trading community.

The bitter astonishment at this last appointment is probably traceable in some measure to that uneasiness in the business world which had been so marked in 1899.[2] With increasing competition in every market of the world, with engineering tenders from America cutting out our

[1] See *The Fortnightly Review*, December 1900.
[2] See p. 13.

own contractors,[1] the business community was asking vehemently for help from more alert methods in the Government departments, for more information, more statistics. But, besides this general demand, there had been a special need this year for efficiency in the Board of Trade. In April the principal railway companies had announced that, owing to falling dividends, they intended to raise the rates for goods traffic, especially for coal; and that the directors of the various boards had come to an agreement in the matter. Indignation at the announcement was enhanced by this glimpse of a sort of monopolist trust. Although the Railway Commissioners, whose sanction was necessary, disallowed most of the proposed increases the indignation did not altogether subside; and when, in August, a serious strike occurred on the Taff Vale Railway—the more serious because on the working of that line largely depended the supply of coal for the navy—there was more than a little inclination to warn other railway directors that responsibility for strikes was to be found partly in the bad management of the lines. As it happened, this particular strike was not a good case, because the men made a bad mistake. The merits of the cause of the strike, which was dissatisfaction with the conditions of labour, and especially the dismissal of a signalman concerned in a previous dispute, were unfortunately obliterated by the fact that the men came out before the expiry of their notices. The strike lasted only some ten days, and ended on terms not unsatisfactory to the men; the strikers were to be taken back within a month, and not to have the lost days counted against their pension service. Moreover a Conciliation Board was set up; and altogether the intervention of Sir W. T. Lewis had been most successful. But the comparative mildness of the directors may have been partly due to the knowledge that they had a case against the men for damages, and

[1] *The Times*, 19th April 1900.

intended to try it. They proceeded first against the union for damages for unlawful picketing. Mr Justice Farwell gave judgment against the trade union, believing that the law did not intend to set up bodies of men capable of holding property and acting as agents, but not responsible in damages. The Court of Appeal reversed this judgment. But the House of Lords finally pronounced for Justice Farwell's view; and trade unionists awoke to the disturbing fact that their funds, which they had thought to be secure, were at the mercy of legal actions against the unions.

But more perturbing, alike to the business world and the community at large, was the serious damage done this year to public confidence in the solicitor's profession. A case that occurred in April was grave enough: a firm of solicitors failing for the enormous sum of £364,000. One of the principals of the firm had absconded, and the Official Receiver had felt himself obliged to say that the case was "pervaded with fraud." [1] That suspicion was not confined to this particular case was clear from the comments it called forth [2]; and also from the fact that the Incorporated Law Society undertook an inquiry, with the object of reassuring the public. The inquiry covered a wide field of professional conduct, from the demand for separate banking accounts for trust funds to the suspicion that some solicitors in a small way of business frequently bolstered up inadequate claims at law for the sake of the costs, and even undertook cases in a purely speculative spirit. But reassurance of the public failed most grievously when, late in the year, Mr B. G. Lake, the very man who had, as chairman of the Disciplinary Committee of the Law Society, been conducting the inquiry, was himself charged with misappropriation of funds. The absconding solicitor in the earlier case had been extradited from America by this time,

[1] *The Times*, 13th April 1900.
[2] Ditto, 27th April 1900.

and the spectacle of two prominent solicitors charged in the police court was disturbing.

It has to be remembered in this connection that the system of credit operations was now so highly organised, and bankers' cheques so universally used, that not only rich people but all who had a certain income had ceased to think of money except as a banking credit. As long as their drafts were honoured to the extent they had reason to expect, people concerned themselves no more about their property. This threw an unfair amount of responsibility upon solicitors, who were left in unsupervised control of the principal sums or the securities of their clients, no questions being asked, or even dreamed of, so long as the client's bank account gave him no reason to make investigations. By this time the absorption of private banks into large joint-stock concerns had grown to an enormous system.[1] Whereas in 1800 there had been forty-six private banks in London, there were in 1900 only three; and not much more than a dozen were left in the rest of England. But the big concerns rather extended than contracted the number of local banks, opening branches in places where smaller firms in the old days would not have found business worth their while. Thus it came about that, though the actual number of banking firms in England was now 303, as against 458 in 1800, there was a branch to every 6900 persons, as against a bank to every 19,200 in 1800.[2]

The large public which had no securities or trust funds to cause them to take an interest in trials of solicitors had an interest more to its mind in a murder discovered at Yarmouth in September. A woman was found strangled on the beach, and eventually her husband, a man named Bennett, was put under arrest. The case has its interest,

[1] See vol. i., p. 264.

[2] See a paper read by Lord Hillingdon to the Institute of Bankers, 9th November 1900.

because it revealed how elaborately and unrestrainedly the newspaper Press could set itself to work in a matter of circumstantial evidence. Clues and correlation of facts were no longer left to the police and the prosecuting counsel, nor even to the defending counsel. They were saleable goods; and most of the newspapers were by now concerned less with the guidance of public opinion than with selling a marketable thing. So much feeling was roused in this case, and so much had been published about it, that when it was sent to the assizes the trial was transferred from the local assize court to the Central Criminal Court, on the ground that a fair trial could not be expected in the local court.

Popular interest was suddenly diverted again by an alarm about the presence of arsenic in beer. There had been some mysterious cases of illness, especially in Salford; and, in the course of investigating them, suspicion had fallen upon beer. Scientists admitted that sulphuric acid, which was used in the preparation of glucose for brewers, might, if even slightly contaminated, produce arsenic. Uneasiness about beer was enough to trouble the whole country, and the last days of December were passed in a dismay so national as to be rather comic.

Dismay on a very different plane was spread in the same month by the famous Cockerton judgment. This brought to a point all the long-standing hostility to the work of school boards in the domain of higher education—hostility compounded of the feelings of secondary schools suffering from subsidised competition, ratepayers who provided the subsidy amid groans at rising rates, and reactionary malcontents who saw no good in advanced education for the children of weekly wage-earners.[1] It had for some time been known that the legal position of Higher Grade Board Schools was, to say the least of it, doubtful; the "block grant" system had been busily discussed earlier in this year. Now a London School Board auditor, Mr

[1] See vol. i., p. 428.

Cockerton, disallowed the payment of certain sums out of the rates for science and art teaching in elementary schools, and surcharged the boards with the payments. Mr Justice Wills, before whom the case brought by the London School Board came, upheld the auditor. The legal position ceased to be doubtful; boards all over the country made up their minds that, until Parliament altered the position, higher education must cease. Meanwhile technical education had been magnificently advanced by the opening in May of fine buildings in connection with the Textile Industries Department of the Yorkshire College at Leeds. General ideas on technical education also were becoming clarified; and it was being urged that in country districts such education should be more exclusively on rural subjects, and not on subjects scheduled alike for town and country.

The sittings of Parliament at the end of the year—chiefly for financing the war—must be noted for the first emergence of the subject that was destined to play a large part in pulling the Liberal party together on a common policy. Not that it was so perceived at the moment. To all observers the party appeared to be without anything to weld it. A change of leadership was the remedy usually prescribed; yet only Lord Rosebery could be suggested.[1] But in these brief sittings there appeared in debate the question of labour in the Johannesburg mines, and the Opposition showed some alertness.

[1] See *The Times*, 19th November 1900.

CHAPTER VII

1901 : THINGS NEW AND OLD

WITH the passing of the old century passed also the sovereign whose name signified an historical era in life and thought, art and letters. The coincidence of the nineteenth century and the Victorian period was complete.

The anxiety about Queen Victoria was first made public on 19th January, in an announcement that "the Queen had not been in her usual health," and had been instructed by her physicians to stay indoors, and abstain from business. The announcement was at once taken seriously. The general character of its terms was alarming ; because, if it was thought advisable without specific information to warn the public, obviously the intention was to prepare for more serious news. It had needed no special knowledge to be aware that the war must inflict upon the Queen at her age a grievous strain. She had seen her country through the worst of its effort, and days terrible to her subjects must have been terrible to her. Now, though hostilities were not over, suspense was past ; and it fell out that her last public act was to be the honouring of the great soldier under whom the fortunes of war had turned. She received Lord Roberts at Osborne, and bestowed upon him an earldom, together with the greatest distinction at her command, the Order of the Garter.

The nation had been taken into confidence not a moment too soon. The first announcement was published on a Saturday. On the Monday morning the

newspapers had to announce that the Queen's condition was one of "increasing weakness, with diminished power of taking nourishment." On the Tuesday morning the bulletins told of a slight rally; the Queen had been able both to take nourishment and to secure some sleep. But it was a brief flicker. On that same day she died, at 6.30 in the evening.

The Privy Council was summoned immediately to proclaim the new sovereign. Parliament was summoned to take the oath of allegiance. For the moment the reality of what had happened was partially obscured in the general excitement about long unwitnessed ceremonies. Nearly sixty-four years had elapsed since the last death of a British sovereign. No man alive had ever taken part in the formalities attendant on a demise of the Crown. Comparatively few even were the living people who remembered the last occasion of the kind, and fewer still who, in those days of no railways and rare newspapers, had had any first-hand knowledge of the ceremonies. The strangeness of the occasion affected everybody, from the great ones of the Privy Council, assembling at the palace in some nervousness at finding themselves more than a mere name, down to the populace, excited by the prospect of seeing real live heralds in tabards making a proclamation. The council heard from the lips of the new sovereign that it was his pleasure to take his place in the line of British kings by that one of his names which was in the regular succession. He had, as Prince of Wales, used always the two names, Albert Edward; he determined, he said, to leave the name Albert to be associated solely with his honoured father, and to ascend the throne as Edward the Seventh. So he was proclaimed. In the mellow old Friary Court of St James's Palace a grey January morning saw the low balcony blaze with strange splendours—heralds, trumpeters and great court officials stepping from the high windows to announce the accession

of King Edward the Seventh; and as the King-of-Arms cried, at the end of the proclamation: "God Save the King," the words unheard for so long were followed by the rolling of drums and the solid beat of the National Anthem from the Guards' band in the courtyard below. Hence the heralds proceeded to Charing Cross, Temple Bar and the Royal Exchange, reading the proclamation at each point.

The King—words so strange in the mouths of Englishmen seemed to revive associations of majesty and state which had long been in abeyance. There had been a time when people resented the withdrawal of Queen Victoria in her personal grief on the death of the Prince Consort. But for a long while now the nation had acquiesced in her distaste for ceremonies; the Court had had but a shadowy existence, the Queen had been an august but remote presence, honouring the nation that honoured her. But national pride in her had not for thirty years been able to see itself, so to speak, pictorially expressed in the sovereign. The name of king roused extraordinary expectation. It was as if the days were returning when the monarch of this realm could be addressed in his own person as "England." Yet they returned with a difference. The new reign was but three days old when there began to be discussion of possible amendment of the royal style and title. It was suggested that the time had come for the inclusion of the colonies. Twenty-five years earlier this idea had been mooted; but then rather as a criticism of the decision to take the empire of India into the title than as a deliberate proposal.[1] Now the intention was different; and in the ensuing session of Parliament the change was made, and the King became "King of Great

[1] Mr Robert Lowe, in the debate on the Royal Titles Bill in April 1876, asked if it were logical to include India, while not recognising the colonies; and Mr Gladstone associated himself with this criticism. See Hansard, Third Series, vol. 227, c. 1740.

Britain and Ireland and of all British Dominions beyond the Seas." The idea must have been already well matured, either in the King's own mind or the mind of his advisers, before the suggestion was made public; because the very form of the new phrase was foreseen in the ascription of one of the messages promulgated by the King directly his immediate obligations were at an end. The messages were addressed, one "To my People," one "To my People beyond the Seas," and one "To the Princes and People of India."

Those immediate obligations recalled the nation from its distractions about the new to undertake its tribute to the old. For ten days the body of Queen Victoria lay in state at Osborne, soldiers of the Guards leaning with bent heads on rifles reversed at the four corners of the draped coffin. But this was the private state in which so much of her life had been passed. Her family gathered there; and the German Emperor had gone far to winning affection in this country by the great promptness with which he had come to take his place among the mourners. On 1st February came the preliminary stage of a funeral expressing all the might and majesty that were Queen Victoria's right, however little of late years she had seemed to care for the parade of them. The fact that she had died at Osborne brought it about that the first grandeur of ceremonial remarkably expressed her rule over an island dominion bulwarked by sea power. The first thunder of the minute guns of her passing came from her warships. At the opening of her last journey through the midst of her people her way was in the sea and her path in the great waters. The leviathans of her fleet lay marking her passage; and from battleships among them floated the ensigns of foreign nations—France, Germany, Japan and others—adding their guns to the salute of a Queen of the High and the Narrow Seas. Yet not even in the immensity of that spectacle was sight lost of the long-familiar pathos

of the small, solitary figure of her people's remembrance. The little *Alberta*, with the canopy aft sheltering the coffin under its dead-white pall, with the gold emblems of sovereignty dimly to be descried upon it, floated very small and lonely between the towering warships from which the sharp flashes leaped into a sombre air. Eight destroyers escorted the *Alberta*, and so solemn was the speed of the procession that men on the warships noticed that the propellers which could drive at so tearing a pace made now no sign of their revolution in the water. Behind the *Alberta* came the larger royal yacht, *Victoria and Albert*, bearing the King and the Duke of Connaught; and behind that the high white sides of the German Emperor's yacht, the *Hohenzollern*. As the procession reached Portsmouth Harbour the sun at its setting broke through the clouds, drawing a low line of red light across the horizon.

Next day the funeral procession passed through London on its way to Windsor. It was a grey winter's day, but long before daybreak the route of the procession was heavily crowded. Now on land, as on the sea the day before, the power of the Sovereign of England surrounded the dead, with all the pomp of a military funeral. Long lines of troops were mustered, the head of them being in St James's Street before the procession started. Volunteers, militia, yeomanry and the regular troops all sent detachments; and band after band took up the Dead Marches. Behind the last of the troops came riding in more spaced array the foreign military attachés, the Headquarters Staff, officers of the Royal Household and aides-de-camp. Then came the gun carriage with its burden, as nearly magnificent as anything could be in the greyness. Upon the bright silken pall rested the Crown, the Orb and the Sceptre. She whom in life London hardly remembered except in the mourning of her widowhood went this time in shining array. The company that followed her was

splendidly royal. In honour of a Mother among rulers, crowned heads for the first time attended a crowned head to the grave. In the front rank rode the King, the Duke of Connaught on his left hand and the German Emperor on his right; three kings, of the Belgians, of Portugal and of the Hellenes, rode next; and in the other ranks, conspicuous with fluttering plumes, bright unusual uniforms and ribbons of foreign orders, were the Grand Duke Michael of Russia, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, the Duke of Aosta, the German Crown Prince, and the Crown Princes of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, and Siam.

For once some unity of conception and some dignity were apparent in the adornment of the streets. It was so obviously not an occasion for the usual inane paper roses and flags that invention had to be set to work. The houses were draped with purple and white, and along the pavements heavy festoons of laurel swung from pillar to pillar, with wreaths of laurel at the fastenings. Thousands of the people, when the procession had passed, took away leaves from the festoons in memory of the day.

At Windsor an awkward moment gave the navy its opportunity to come to the front again. The artillery horses waiting there with another gun carriage grew restive in the delay, and became unmanageable. With a fortunate readiness, bluejackets, accustomed to drawing their own guns, took charge, and drew the gun carriage up the hill to the castle. Over the open vault in St George's Chapel sounded again the strangeness of long-unused ceremonial when the herald stepped forward and read that stately recognition of the old and the new: "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God to take out of this transitory life to His divine mercy the most high, most mighty, and most excellent Monarch . . ." Then the pageantry was closed. On the following day the body of Queen Victoria was laid in the mausoleum at Frogmore, beside the body of the Prince Consort.

It was soon made clear that the new order was to be imbued with new ideas. The King allowed it to be known that the tendency, which had naturally increased under Queen Victoria's force of habit and advancing years, to interpret court and personal mourning as withdrawal from public appearances, was not to continue. A man so exact in feeling for state etiquette as King Edward could see as well where etiquette ended as where it began. His conception of a court was that it should be careful not to allow its own necessarily wide obligations in such matters as mourning to become an oppression. As Queen Victoria grew old and saw, as the old must see, a greater number among the dead than among the living of those she had known and been attached to, the Court Circular had become more and more often an announcement of elaborate memorial services. King Edward, while careful not to relax established formalities of mourning, was equally careful that they should not encroach upon the sovereign's public life. He returned with the Queen to London a few days after the funeral ; and proceeded on 14th February to open Parliament in full state. Here again was a ceremony disused for more than fifteen years. It appeared incidentally that, while the King's clear conception of etiquette was in some respects to be a relief, it was in others to exact stricter recognition of forms. Since the Queen had given up opening Parliament in person, the Speech from the Throne had become almost avowedly a mere Cabinet announcement ; and its terms were usually divulged in advance. From this time a change took place, and nothing was disclosed beforehand. The people, pardonably eager for pomps of which they had long been deprived, gathered again in immense crowds on the short route of the procession. It was known that the revival of court ceremonial was to be supported by the appearance of all the handsome old dress coaches that the peers could produce ; and the heavy painted vehicles, with their tasselled

hammer-cloths and footmen in state liveries standing on the board behind, enlivened the period of waiting for the amazing gilded glass coach in which the King and Queen rode down to Westminster. Excitement even unduly affected the honourable members of the House of Commons. When Black Rod summoned the Speaker to attend upon his Majesty, the solemn stillness of the waiting House of Lords was invaded by an unseemly mob; the rows of peers in their voluminous scarlet and ermine, and of peeresses glittering with diamonds, the orderly ranks of officers of state around the steps of the throne, even the King and Queen in their magnificence, turned eyes of pained surprise towards the trampling irruption of the Commons. Certainly there was little in the speech itself to cause excitement. But this being the first occasion of the new sovereign meeting Parliament, it was his duty to make the Accession Declaration, expressing his adherence to the Protestant faith; and out of this grew at once a controversy. One of its effects was to show an extraordinary laggardness in some regions of thought. The Roman Catholics raised vigorous objection to the survival in this declaration of phrases which they deemed offensive to their consciences, and which appeared to the greater number of their Protestant fellow-subjects to be at least couched in terms discordant with taste and proper feeling. The Roman Catholics pointed out that they had long been admitted to full civil liberty in this country, and could hold offices, sit in Parliament, exercise the franchise, and be in the most complete sense the King's loyal subjects; was it right, therefore, that the King should be compelled still to affront the susceptibilities of such subjects? Yet no sooner was the question raised than a body of opposition began to appear which showed no sign of change from the days before Emancipation. It would hardly have been surprising to wake up in London some morning and find "No Popery" chalked again upon doors. A change

which might well have seemed certain beforehand to proceed by common consent was checked.

After the opening of Parliament there was no further great ceremonial this year. The King did not, as has been said, neglect the formalities of court mourning. But in spite of the proper quiet that was observed the changed spirit of the new regime was present. It was felt in several subtle ways. London, for instance, it might be said, had become again a genuine capital of the kingdom. Queen Victoria had grown less and less inclined to live there; Balmoral and Osborne had her heart, and Windsor was as near as she cared to be to the seat of government, even in times of important events. The King was a Londoner. Balmoral had in his mind only the place that a Scottish castle naturally has in the mind of a great gentleman, a place for deer stalking and grouse shooting at the proper time of year. Osborne had no meaning at all for him. He had long owned a considerable estate at Sandringham, where he preserved on a large scale; and this place represented to him another of the usual requirements of a great gentleman; there was no shooting at Osborne. The result was that the Court became again the natural head of society; its ways were the ways of society, and London was its centre. Government, again, had no longer a divided habitation. Life returned, on less important planes, to many empty shells of duty: levees and courts, meetings of the Privy Council, and even such affairs as the daily changing of the guard at the palaces. The interests, the talk, the cheerful expectations of the people pivoted upon London again.

It was just as well that the public mind should be mildly distracted, for the year did not open prosperously. Trade had been declining for the past six months; the drain of men for the war had at last made itself seriously felt, and as coal had risen in price the iron and steel trades and shipbuilding were in a depressed condition. The de-

claration of railway dividends in February provided another blow. Naturally the attempt to raise freights in the previous year [1] had been a warning to railway shareholders not to expect too much; but the dividends were lower even than had been anticipated, and the explanation offered, which was to the effect that for some time past directors had been dividing too much and spending too little upon improvements, was not of a kind to raise hopes for the immediate future.[2] On top of all came a very serious failure in the City. The London & Globe Finance Corporation announced that it was unable to meet its engagements, and soon afterwards the Standard Exploration Company, an allied concern, went into liquidation. These companies were chiefly the creation of a financier of the modern comet-like kind, Mr Whittaker Wright. He had drawn an immense amount of money into operations of a kind very difficult for anyone but a Stock Exchange expert to follow. The companies, of which there were three principal ones in alliance, owned certain mining properties and land concessions, but the profits largely depended on complicated dealing among the companies, and upon the results of a sort of stock and share trust which they comprised. Their failure not only involved monetary loss to thousands of comparatively small investors attracted by large dividends, but also brought back again all the old mistrust of "show" boards of directors. Lord Dufferin had been chairman of the London & Globe Finance Corporation; and it was melancholy to see a man of his most distinguished record and his high public service confessing that he had found it impossible to master the intricacies of the operations of a company over which he nominally presided. This was exactly the kind of incident to check investment; and a year starting in trade

[1] See page 118.

[2] See *The Times*, 17th February 1901.

depression could ill afford coyness in the money market.

Meanwhile there was the financial drain of the war, still going on, and hardly on a less expensive scale. In February Lord Kitchener asked for 30,000 mounted men. The war had early become a lesson in the value of extreme mobility; and the guerilla fighting was driving home the conviction that until we worked almost entirely with mounted men we should never wear down the resistance of fighters who could always move quickly enough to break cordons and make off for a rest—quickly enough also to be perpetually refitting by swift raids on our less mobile convoys. A third War Budget had to be faced, and a fresh war loan. The latter had to be issued at a price considerably lower than the earlier ones. Thirty millions of Consols, ranking with "Goschens" (that is, bearing $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent., to sink to $2\frac{1}{2}$ in 1903) were put on the market at $94\frac{1}{2}$, and at this price were subscribed about five times over. Another thirty millions were placed privately with the big financial houses.[1] These two sums raised the total of the war loans to a hundred and thirty-five millions. For the Budget extra millions had to be found. The revenue returns had, indeed, exceeded the estimate by nearly three millions; but once again the figures were deceptive, because of advance clearances. It had been plain that new taxation would be imposed, and bonded goods had been cleared to escape it. Sugar was pretty well known to be in for a large part of the burden, and there were shrewd guesses at an intention to tax corn.[2] "Broadening the basis of taxation," which had for years been a Conservative ideal, seemed now to be the only method in the mind of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. A duty of 4s. 2d. a cwt. was imposed on sugar, to raise five millions; and an export duty of 1s. a ton was placed

[1] *The Times*, 27th April 1901.
[2] *Ibid.*, 5th March 1901.

on coal, to raise two millions. A further 2d. on the income-tax, raising it to 1s. 2d., was to provide the balance. The coal-duty made trouble at once; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer found that "broadening the basis" was apt to lead to unexpected complications. He spent much of his time with deputations of coalowners, who brought before him strange results of his new tax.

This kind of finance, bringing neither courage nor originality to bear upon circumstances demanding both,[1] was of a piece with the rest of the year's work in the Commons. The new Parliament was not answering to any hopes Mr Chamberlain may have entertained. The enthusiasm of victory soon waned; Ministerialists returned to their slack ways in face of the weakness of the Opposition; ministers were described by their own organs as careless and shiftless, and Mr Balfour's leadership was not admired; lapses of memory and frequent absence from the Treasury Bench were charged against him.[2] The Cabinet held hardly any meetings; this fact was so patent that political philosophers even began to ask whether the theory of the Cabinet was undergoing a change—whether Government was really carried on by a small inner Cabinet, meeting informally, and obtaining the formal consent of other members by letters and telegrams.[3] The ineffectual mood of the Government was shown by the feebleness of its attempt to deal with the situation produced by the Cockerton judgment.[4] The Appeal Court upheld the divisional court, and so hastened the complete stoppage of all higher-grade education. It was impossible to acquiesce in this; Conservatives and Unionists showed quite as strongly as Liberals their feeling that the cutting short of such activities on a point of law called for instant

[1] See *The Progress of the Nation*, edited by F. W. Hirst, p. 690.
[2] See *The Nineteenth Century* for June and September 1901.
[3] *The Times*, 15th October 1901.
[4] See p. 121.

remedy. But the Bill which the Government introduced in response to the general demand was obviously a half-measure, hastily framed. It proposed to set up local committees over the school boards, with control of the spending of the rate, but no power to impose rates; and in the making of this new authority to get behind the legal stumbling-block of the existing Acts. Within a month the Bill was abandoned; and a one-clause Bill was introduced, by which local authorities were permitted to empower school boards to carry on secondary education for a year. There was considerable debate on this, the Opposition asking why this empowering of school boards could not be done directly, without the intervention of local authorities. The Government was really enunciating the principle of a new educational authority. But the situation was thus patched up for the moment; and Sir John Gorst, President of the Board of Education, made reassuring statements to the effect that after all the Cockerton judgment had only affected some fifty higher-grade schools, and 900 out of the 7000 science and art pupils.

The only other matter of importance in Parliament was the production of a new scheme of army organisation. Its keynotes were decentralisation of commands, and the maintenance in peace time of commands under the generals who would command in war. The army was to be organised into six army corps, three of them in efficient existence, and three skeletons for training purposes, to be filled at need from the reserves. The scheme was not received with great enthusiasm. It was criticised as aiming too high and missing the immediate necessities; for before making an ideal organisation it was necessary to obtain the men to put into it. Recruiting had fallen off, and this scheme did nothing to provide fresh inducements to recruits, either in improved pay or better conditions of service. The "skeletons" were really nothing

but phantoms. The most cynical critics alleged that Mr Brodrick had been induced by the military authorities to give a final proof of the impossibility of maintaining an adequate army on the principle of voluntary enlistment, and so to pave the way for compulsory military service. Ultimately Mr Brodrick weakened one of his chief arguments by his appointments to the three main commands. The 1st Army Corps was given to General Buller; the 2nd to Sir Evelyn Wood, and the 3rd to the Duke of Connaught. People very naturally asked what had become of the principle that the corps should be commanded by the men who would command them in war.

This was efficiency on paper—with Lord Kitchener complaining of the poor quality of the mounted men sent out to him, men so largely untrained that they had to be drilled on arrival. The outcry for real efficiency was growing in strength, with the eloquent voice of Lord Rosebery added to it. Sometimes it took the line of the widest philosophical criticism, reviving Matthew Arnold's reproach of England as "out of the centre of thought," and "pecking at the outside" of her problems. From that it passed most easily to discussion of our methods in secondary schools, and public schools, to which the Board of Education was beginning to pay particular attention. A report was published this year on the preparatory school system, which had been practically a growth of the last thirty years, and was excellent from the standpoint of the individual attention given to pupils, but not wide enough in curriculum, being limited by the requirements of public schools. The most advanced areas of education were equally stirred. The London School of Economics put forward a claim to support on the ground that its training would turn out men able "to get the affairs of the nation on a business footing." The university of Birmingham set to work to create a Faculty of Commerce. Mr Carnegie gave an immense sum of money, the income of

which was calculated at £100,000, to be held on trust, half of the income being applied to the endowment of fellowships and the forwarding of research, and the other half to pay class fees and provide maintenance grants for poor students. At the lowest end of the educational scale a new effort was set on foot, largely by the advocacy of Mrs Humphry Ward, to bring in to the educational system those who had hitherto been kept outside it by physical deficiencies. The scheme, financed by private funds, but approved by the London School Board, was to provide ambulances to take crippled children to the schools, and couches for their use in the schoolrooms.

Then the cry for efficiency turned in other directions. It deplored the difficulties of reform in a nation so easily diverted from its intentions by any new scent of amusement or passing interest.[1] And having thus approached the ordinary member of the community, it fell upon the workman. Did he work keenly enough ? Did not trade union rules tend to limit output, to make men adhere to some particular standard of work, not pitched very high ? Was there not even now a resentment of new machinery and speeding-up of production ?

In December the restless distrust of ourselves was quickened by a speech made by the Prince of Wales. He had just returned from a tour of the colonies, his return being marked first by the King's assumption of the new royal title embracing the colonies, and secondly by the elevation of the Duke of Cornwall (as the Duke of York had been termed since the King's accession) to the dignity of Prince of Wales. Speaking at the Guildhall, he gave, as one of the lessons of his tour, the warning that England should take to heart not only the example of the progressive communities she had founded, but the competition produced in their growing markets, and should " wake up." So the year ended with the demand

[1] *The Times*, 16th October 1901.

for efficiency undiminished; and even roused to more activity.

Yet, though so many people talked about it, the proneness to easy distraction showed little sign of disappearing. The great beer alarm occupied as much of the beginning of the year as was not given to greater events. So national a subject was it that a Royal Commission was appointed. A Local Government Board report, by one of the board's medical inspectors, showed that the cases of poisoning had been very numerous, about 2000 in Manchester alone, nearly 800 in Salford, and over 500 in Lichfield. The area thus known to be affected was comparatively small; but, since the origin of the contamination appeared to be a process employed in most breweries, the alarm spread to every part of the country. But people remained high-spirited enough to invent a cheerfully idiotic form of riddle; the "What gave Barry Pain?" type of question flourished, and produced a competition in equally idiotic answers. Then an unusually hot summer exaggerated the growing habit of taking week ends out of town, and inclined men to longer holidays—facts sure to be noted by the apostles of efficiency. The "back to the land" pose was also remarked this year in a sudden outburst of gardening books; the craze spread upwards from the people with week-end cottages to great ladies, who suddenly began to take a violent interest in the beautiful old gardens of their country houses, and frequented flower shows with pencils and catalogues. As for the holiday habit, it may be said now to have lain in the direction, not only of lengthened holidays at the normal time, but of new holidays at unheard-of times. Winter sports were beginning to be known in England. As yet they were pursued mostly in Sweden and Norway[1]; but descriptions of them sowed the seed which a few years later was to take business

[1] *The Times*, 28th February 1901.

men by the hundred and the thousand to Switzerland at Christmas time. Moreover, the conducted tour was reaching up to social strata which had hitherto despised it; the inventor of Cook's travels must have smiled when he saw deans and parish priests, dons and schoolmasters launching out for the Isles of Greece in large steam-vessels chartered to carry a select company.

In the autumn Sir Thomas Lipton, with a new yacht, *Shamrock II.*, had everybody out on the Embankment again of an evening, watching coloured lights—even huge outlines of yachts moving as the telegrams came in from America to show the fortunes of another challenge for the America Cup. The British yacht was beaten again, but by such narrow margins of time that people began to think this must surely represent the best we could possibly do under the exacting conditions. Flying leapt into the place of a popular excitement with the performances of M. Santos-Dumont, a rich young Brazilian resident in Paris, who had built a cigar-shaped dirigible balloon, and had actually steered it on a circular course round the Eiffel Tower, before the wind pressure caused the nose of the gas-bag to collapse, and foul the screw. The aeronaut was saved by the balloon catching on the corner of a high building. The success of the venture was more emphasised than its failure; and as yet the "heavier than air" principle entered into no competition with such displays. In another sphere of mechanical invention, the Marconi system of wireless telegraphy made one more great stride. A station had been erected at Poldhu in Cornwall, and thence signals were exchanged across the Atlantic to a station in Newfoundland.

Motor cars were distinctly under a cloud. Many powerful people had refused so far to surrender to their utility, and still swelled the ranks of those who complained of the noise, the dangerous speed, the raising of dust, the destruction of the road surface, and all the other counts in

the indictment. Demand grew loud for the numbering of all cars, and the licensing of drivers ; though it was hardly believed, since such restrictions had not been imposed as a condition of the liberty of the road in 1896, that motorists could now be subjected to them.[1]

In one connection, however, the internal combustion engine had made a change of which there was no criticism. Submarine boats had become practicable. In 1901 the British Government made its first provision for adding some of those boats to our navy, experiments by foreign countries, notably by France, having been watched with profit. The other new glories of the navy had come to a sad end. Both the turbine-equipped destroyers, with their marvellous turn of speed, the *Viper* and the *Cobra*, had been lost, the former being wrecked during manœuvres, and the latter, more mysteriously, during a voyage in the North Sea. From the first the truth was guessed at ; the question asked was, not what had she collided with, but had she broken her back by hitting something or by a mere wave-shock. In other words, had the frightful speed been too much for her ? The court martial on the loss of her decided, in effect, in the latter sense : the ship's structure had not been strong enough for a speed so far beyond any of the ordinary calculations of strain. It must be remarked here that the navy, like everything else, came into the range of the critics. The education of our military officers had been shown by the war to be somewhat in default ; was the education of our naval officers as good as it could be ? And in ships, as well as in personnel, were we answering the requirements of an age of standardisation ? This last word was rapidly becoming the catchword which " progress " had been twenty years earlier.

The Church was not without response to the probings which were being everywhere applied. Its voice was not

[1] *The Times*, 12th April 1901.

very helpful, perhaps, on such matters as workmen's wages, or the erection of model dwellings. But it continued to try hard to drop unprofitable disputes about ritual. Certain changes of this year in the episcopate tended in one sense in that direction, though in another they exasperated extreme Evangelicals. Dr Creighton, Bishop of London, died, a man who had merged great historical learning, and a student's love of the quiet paths of knowledge, in the demands of a high administrative office; and had had the consolation of applying the balm of scholarly wit and intellectual detachment to the sore places of a bishop's work. He was succeeded by Dr Winnington Ingram, who as head of Oxford House and afterwards Bishop of Stepney brought to the episcopal throne such intimate knowledge of the poor working London as had never yet found a place there. His appointment was a most striking case of preferment turning rather to faithful and, one might say, inspired Church work than to scholastic reputation. But he was known to be a High Churchman; and a later appointment during the year, that of Dr Charles Gore to be Bishop of Worcester, was even more markedly of a kind to cause a return of strife. The High Church party had just lost a notable member by the death of Canon Carter, of Clewer, who had been one of the most active in reviving the work of Sisterhoods in the service of the Church. The new Bishop of London set himself to apply to his rather vexed diocese (though certainly less vexed than it was once, thanks to Dr Creighton's judicious control) that method of "godly monitions" which at the beginning of the year the archbishops and bishops had appealed to the clergy to heed. The strong desire now was to show that ritual prosecutions were harmful in every direction, and that both extremes should avoid them for the sake of the Church's influence.

There was not so much "taking stock" of advances and

changes in thought and taste as might have been expected at the opening of a new century. In art the work of Rodin was beginning to be known and discussed in England. But rich people were still some distance from speculating in the work of modern artists; and a craze just now for the collection of mezzotints and old coloured prints was the excitement of the salerooms. However, a certain sense that design and craftsmanship had genuinely revived in the applied arts expressed itself rather deplorably in the market for objects of L'Art Nouveau; they were, even at this early period, tortured in outline and affectedly barbaric in material. Lumps of turquoise matrix did duty for jewellery; and articles of silver or pewter were given shapes and surfaces which suggested that the metal had somehow guttered in a draught. The opening of the Whitechapel Art Gallery, given by Mr Passmore Edwards, must be recorded, as a sign of the now established position of an excellently managed system of interesting East London in pictures. The drama hung very much between old and new. On the one hand, Mr Beerbohm Tree drew upon modern ingenuity to stage *Twelfth Night*, with an elaboration of detail and a degree of artifice never before attempted. On the other hand, *The Times* had taken for its dramatic critic Mr Walkley, whose articles in *The Star* had shown no particular reverence for established tradition; and Mr Henry Arthur Jones was hinting at a possible future for a repertoire theatre in London, and perhaps also in Manchester or Birmingham.[1]

One of the most startling publications of the year was a series of articles by Dr Robert Anderson on prison management. The subject was not a new one. From time to time there had been an inclination to plume ourselves upon the growing wisdom of our prison administration; and recently the separate treatment of first offenders, and

[1] In *The Nineteenth Century*, March 1901.

the provision of special places of detention for lads (the best known being at Borstal in Kent), where the time of detention was used for educational purposes, had been a source of gratification. The hooligan was becoming a cause of much public anxiety—a Twentieth-Century League was inaugurated for dealing with him—and it was believed that the Borstal system offered new hopes for his case. Public attention of a different kind was, as it happened, called to Borstal at the end of 1900 by the escape of two prisoners, who managed, in spite of the spirited hunting by newspaper reporters, to remain at large until well into 1901. Dr Anderson, who had been Assistant-Commissioner of Metropolitan Police, and was now on the verge of retirement, disturbed complacency by something very like scornfulness. His view was that all the modern classification and separation did not touch the root of the matter; and he affirmed that what was wanted was a classification apart of habitual criminals, and the imprisonment of them for life. But the amazing point in his articles was his assertion that if only seventy men, upon whom the police could lay their hands without much trouble, were thus put out of the way, the organisation of crime against property would be dislocated to such a degree that in ten years the community would be free of it.[1] The difficulty felt by those who read his articles was that juries would be slow to convict a man in such a way as to shut him up for life for offences against property; and the tone of Dr Anderson's articles was not altogether of a kind to win assent.

Casual distractions of the year were not the only hindrance to the cry for efficiency. The nation could hardly be expected to pay heed, when it was in a state of division which increased rapidly in bitterness. At the beginning of the year the Conciliation Committee was so far unpopular that it was labelled "the stop-

[1] *The Nineteenth Century*, March 1901.

the-war party." Two prominent Afrikanders of the Cape Ministry, Mr Merriman and Mr Sauer, were in England in the summer; and addressed meetings which in some cases were noisy, and in others were besieged by crowds outside the building. A new subject of controversy had arisen. The pursuit of the war by methods of cordoning districts and clearing them up by mobile columns, together with the burning of farms, had necessitated the removal of Boer women and children to large concentration camps. By the month of June there were some 25,000 Boer people in such camps, living mostly in tents, but sometimes in temporary structures of wood and iron. They were supplied daily with rations, and dairies were attached to the camps. There would in any case have been a feeling among Radicals that this was one more of the lamentable lengths to which we were being driven by determination to stop at nothing short of absolute subjection—one more of the seed-beds of lasting hatred. But Miss Emily Hobhouse, who had visited the camps, brought back news of distress and illness and terrible death rates, which made the Conciliation Committee fasten sharply upon the concentration camps in their attacks upon the Government. For the latter half of the year one side answered another with ever-growing animosity. A meeting was actually called at the Guildhall to protest against criticism of the war and the camps. Cheers were given at a meeting in the Queen's Hall for De Wet. Any tendency there may have been (and there was certainly some tendency) to admit the justice and truth of Miss Hobhouse's reports was swamped in anger at the activity of the conciliatory propaganda. The average death rate in the camps in May was about 117 per thousand, but the highest rate, at the Bloemfontein camp, was shocking, amounting to 383·16 per thousand. Yet when once this matter had become connected in the public mind with "Pro-Boerism," it could not be regarded

isely or patiently. A Blue Book was published late in e year, admitting that there had been much sickness nd death in the camps, but pointing out that the Boers ı them could not be induced either to submit properly o medical treatment or to obey sanitary regulations. This was not likely to satisfy people who maintained hat the camps ought never to have been brought into istence.

The very serious animosity prevalent throughout the ıtumn and winter in England was partly due also to wave of depression about the war which had swept over e country in the summer. We were spending a million and half a week in the attempt to gather into nets scattered ommandos, which not only continually cut off detached odies of troops and convoys, stripped them of clothes, arms, ammunition and provisions, and retired to mountainous country to refit, but even brought about a second invasion of Cape Colony. Lord Kitchener's determined and deliberate methods, the cutting up of the country into sections by lines of block-houses, and the perpetual sweeping movements in these sections, were eminently sound, but were not of a kind to stimulate martial excitement at home. Every week he reported to the War Office his bag of prisoners, often balanced by losses and failures on our side; and the dragging length of the tale exasperated and depressed a public which throughout had not shown much either of patience or of intellectual grasp of the operations. Hasty expectations meant disappointment; and bad temper turned naturally to vent itself upon fellow-countrymen who said that we had better acknowledge that we were aiming at a wrong object, and make terms. To criticise the concentration camps was to criticise the whole of the work that Lord Kitchener was doing; the camps could, from the war party's point of view, be regarded as a piece of almost quixotic humaneness. Then the foundation of a League of Liberals against

Aggression and Militarism, with a programme of meetings throughout the autumn, was interpreted as a general accusation of bloodthirstiness. Feeling rose hotly and rapidly. Conciliation meetings were broken up, and ended often in free fights. Miss Hobhouse, starting on a second visit to the concentration camps, with a relief fund to administer, was prevented from landing at Cape Town, and sent back to England. Finally in December came the worst riot of all. Mr Lloyd George had undertaken to speak in Birmingham; and this was regarded as an unwarrantable intrusion into a city devoted to Mr Chamberlain. The town hall, where Mr Lloyd George was to speak, was besieged by an extremely angry crowd. Stones and bricks were hurled through the windows, one of the doors was broken down in a rush, and pistols were fired. The police did their best; no less than ninety-seven of them were injured. But at last relief came with the descent of a snowstorm at about 10.30 P.M. The crowd slowly dispersed, and Mr Lloyd George was removed in disguise from the town hall. One man lost his life during the evening.

Again the party of opposition to the war was involuntarily sheltering the Government. The chagrin of the nation vented itself on the "Pro-Boers," and the slackness on the part of the Government, which had been matter of complaint at the end of the session, was again forgotten. The Ministry could even blunder with comparative impunity in efforts to put a good face upon the situation. For instance, a proclamation fixing 15th September as the close of "legitimate hostilities" was a complete fiasco. It had no effect whatever on the course of hostilities, and was merely a threat delivered to empty air. Then Lord Halsbury, the Lord Chancellor, speaking at Sheffield in October, tried his hand at minimising the long drag of the campaign by saying that "a sort of a war" only was now going on. If national irritation had not had other victims,

these Ministerial stupidities could hardly have escaped as lightly as they did. Comparatively few discontented people were heard asking what the Cabinet was doing. Nor was there any real Liberal strength to be thrown into attack on normal party lines. Active and vigorous as the "Pro-Boers" were, the Liberal party in general presented no formidable sight. Wrangles in its high places were constant; and, though a meeting of the party at the Reform Club in July produced a formal resolution of loyalty to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, it was not taken very seriously. He had had his part in criticising the conduct of the war; and, in the mood of too-ready labelling with opprobrious phrases, a comment of his upon certain specific proposals as "methods of barbarism" had been spread abroad sedulously as expressing his view of the war in general. Hence Liberals of less determined views on the subject, like Mr Asquith, publicly denied the right of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman to regard his declarations as representing the true Liberal faith. All that observers could foresee was an eclipse of the present leader, which should involve also Sir William Harcourt and Mr Morley, and the return to power of Lord Rosebery, with such lieutenants as Mr Asquith, Sir Edward Grey and Mr Haldane. The resolution at the Reform Club meeting was wittily described as a resolution of "loyalty with a latchkey" [1]; and it was supposed that Lord Rosebery would have no difficulty in making a following. When he "came out into the open" in July with a public speech, speculation grew keener. True, he spoke of himself as "ploughing a lonely furrow," but he added: "before I get to the end of the furrow I may find myself not alone." Still stronger grew the interest when it was announced that he was to address a great meeting in Derbyshire in December. The scene of the meeting—the small town of Chesterfield, where there was so little accommodation for a gather-

[1] Article by Dr Joseph Parker in *The Times*, 1st October 1901.

ing of this kind that a large railway shed had to be employed for the occasion—gave a singularly detached and "free-lancing" air to the proceedings. But it was significant that Liberals of all shades of thought assembled to hear Lord Rosebery, even to the point of calling forth satirical remarks about the contending factions sitting down together. Most of them must have ended by asking themselves what they came into the wilderness to see. The essence of the speech again was easy to bandy about, Lord Rosebery being a master of phrases. He besought the Liberal party to "wipe its slate clean" in certain respects, and consider very carefully what it was going to write upon it in future. The "clean slate" was a chilly metaphor for a December gathering; and provoked the reflection that Lord Rosebery's own slate had never been remarkable for any bold inscriptions. The Chesterfield speech rapidly fell back into a mere bid for a Centre Party.

CHAPTER VIII

1902 : CORONATION YEAR

IN 1902 the national life, after the distortions of the last few years, began to shape itself again. In one sense, with all the excitement of the coronation, and the King's serious illness on the very eve of the ceremony, this could not be called a normal year. Yet below these incidents the currents of national affairs began to return to habitual channels. The uneasy search for new methods of efficiency largely subsided; the Ministry and the Ministerial party were not always being nagged at for slackness; the Liberals, though still deeply divided, found more common ground than for years past, and grew less assiduous in duelling with one another. Finally, the war at last came to an end; and people found themselves free to confess weariness of penny trumpets and peacocks' feathers without being labelled "Pro-Boers."

The man whose life had been spent in the making of a united South Africa did not live to see the close of the war. Cecil Rhodes died on 26th March. He was not yet fifty years old, but he had deeply impressed himself on his generation. The earlier conception of the quiet mysterious financier in Disraeli's novels, pulling the strings of courts and cabinets, had given place before Rhodes's stubborn figure to the financier creating continents in the light of day. It was remarked as one of his prominent characteristics that he "cordially disliked the purely parliamentary type of man"[1]; and he preferred to have as his fulcrum the business community, and the general public's con-

[1] *The Times*, 27th March 1902.

fidence. He had small charm, but an extraordinary power of impressing people. So wide was this faculty that men as different as the German Emperor, Lord Rosebery and General Gordon all believed in him profoundly. The greater part of his enormous fortune he placed by his will in the hands of trustees, a sum amounting to nearly two millions, for the income to be applied to a system of scholarships designed to bring England and the colonies, America, and Germany into a better understanding of one another. Sixty scholarships at Oxford of £300 a year each were to go to young men in the colonies, twenty-four of them to be from South Africa. Two scholarships were allotted to each of the United States; and fifteen to Germany of £250 a year each. The total endowment was £51,750 a year, for 170 scholarships. The scholars were to be chosen, not merely for intellectual attainments, but also with regard to general good-fellowship and bodily activity. At the same time £100,000 were bequeathed to Rhodes's own college of Oriel, with the stipulation that his trustees were to be consulted about the spending of it, since dons lived remote from the world, and were "children in commercial matters." It was a will that struck resoundingly upon the impulse towards efficiency; and resoundingly too upon the new admiration for the colonies and the men they turned out.

Parliament went unusually early to work, meeting in the middle of January. The Government seemed to have reformed its ideas of a session's business, and the programme was energetic; it included an Education Bill, aiming at no less than a reconstruction of the system of control; a Licensing Bill; an Irish Land Purchase Bill; and a London Water Bill. At moments in the early months of the year the Liberal party appeared to be hardly in better condition than before. Lord Rosebery's Chesterfield speech was still reverberating; and the expectation that he intended to remain in the open, and

active in politics, seemed to promise a conclusive struggle for leadership, and some definition of official Liberalism. Even the prospect of conclusive struggle was more healthy and natural than the uncertain swayings of the past two or three years. The conflict was at any rate fairly openly declared when, in February, the National Liberal Federation professed its loyalty to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, applauding his determination not to clean the slate; and Lord Rosebery immediately announced his "definite separation" from Sir Henry. He followed this by founding the Liberal League, an organisation rather adroitly described by its nickname of "the Liberal Imps"; Lord Rosebery's purpose was better served by using only the adjective "Liberal," but the league consisted of those who had classed themselves during the war as Liberal Imperialists. Mr Asquith, in a communication to his constituents, stated that the members of the league did not regard themselves as a body outside the party, but meant to stay inside; he also made it clear that Home Rule was one of the items to be cleaned off the slate. The league started with some notable men in it, men who could not be conceived of as absent from the next Liberal Ministry. It was no wonder, therefore, that the common belief should be that the Liberal Imperialists would gradually, but finally, take charge of the party, forcing Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman either into their attitude, or out of leadership. He, however, showed no sign of being easily disposed of. He whipped up his own supporters, took his line firmly against Lord Rosebery, and surprised everybody by the imperturbability with which he confronted alike the slashing attacks of Mr Chamberlain and the open disagreement of his neighbours on the Front Opposition Bench. In truth, he had no need to make way for another leader. The Liberal League might gather to itself notable names; but what would Lord Rosebery, Mr Asquith, Sir Edward Grey, Sir

Henry Fowler and Mr Haldane represent to the Radical working men when the emotions of the war died out? Even as things stood, 123 members went into the Opposition lobby on a war amendment to the Address. The session was not three months old before the Liberal fortunes had taken a turn which showed that those who proposed to label themselves by an attitude arising out of the war alone had forgotten a very old-established line of division between parties outside the House. The Education Bill was introduced in March. It set up one form of local authority for elementary, secondary and technical education, the authority to be a committee of the town or county council together with co-opted members. It was to be the rating authority for educational purposes, and in the allocation of funds the voluntary schools were to rank with board schools. This abolition of school boards was not received without regret; the boards had done good work, had acquired experience and wisdom, and had been wholly free from corruption. At the same time, however, the unification of the whole system was a gain; the "educational ladder" was made more practicable of ascent; vexed questions of what school boards could or could not do would be at an end; and education would be associated with the general activities of local life. But the case of the voluntary schools instantly aroused controversy. The argument that, if they received public funds, they must surrender private management, returned in force. How great the struggle was to be no one fully foresaw.[1] In a month it had developed on a large scale. The Government had indeed challenged fundamentally the Nonconformists' objection to the use of local rates for the support of denominational schools. The provision that representation was to be given to the local authority among the managers of such

[1] For instance *The Manchester Guardian* at first welcomed the Bill without any hint of sectarian controversy.

schools did not conciliate the Nonconformists. The Government admitted that a dual system of management was not ideal; but it existed, and it was not going to be allowed to interfere with the general unification. Secular education—the only method that could give complete uniformity, since churchmen objected as much to colourless religious instruction under the Cowper-Temple compromise, as Nonconformists objected to definite Church instruction—was not agreeable to the majority of the country; and Mr Chamberlain was the mouthpiece of this conviction, the more effectively because he had himself once been an advocate of secular education. The power of the local authority to appoint as many as one-third of the managers of a voluntary school would, it was agreed, be enough to ensure that the school buildings were adequate and in proper repair, and that other than religious education was not unduly narrowed. But a meeting of the Council of the Evangelical Free Churches in April made nothing of such arguments. Dr Clifford called for another Cromwell; Mr Hugh Price Hughes fulminated against "this infamous new Church rate"; and the realities of the Bill were obscured by a violent sectarian storm. The Order paper became choked with amendments; clauses were fought word by word. It might have seemed that the House of Commons really needed some such obstinate fighting, for both sides grew rapidly the better for it. Ministerialists had to be more diligent in attendance; the Opposition found itself reunited in the division lobbies; and, though the debating was sharp, there were fewer of the contemptuous recriminations that had become common.

The Ministry's programme of legislation was not, however, the first point of interest in the session. That was found rather in Mr Balfour's new rules of procedure. The main object of them was to reserve more of the time of the House for Government business. This was in

future to occupy all sittings except the evening sittings on Tuesday and Wednesday after the dinner-hour, and the short day of the week on which the House met at noon; after Easter, Government business was also to occupy Tuesday evening, and after Whitsuntide the Wednesday evening as well. The growth of the habit of week-ending was shown in another rule providing that the early sitting should be on Friday, instead of on Wednesday. Debates on the first reading of Bills were abolished; and it was ordered that first readings should be a mere formality, unless, in the case of a Government Bill, the minister in charge wished to make a short explanatory speech, in which case he was to be allowed ten minutes, but no debate was to arise. Naturally there were lamentations over the vanishing prerogatives of the private member; but on the whole the new rules made an easier passage than had been expected. If the private member lost much on the one hand, he had gained a little by the earlier hours of meeting which had been established of recent years. In the long sitting from 2.30 P.M. to 7.30 P.M. there was more time for the lesser lights of the House to make speeches; and it was thought that young members advanced more quickly to a reputation.[1]

There were wry faces when the time came for the Budget. The revenue had not done badly. The last quarter of 1901 showed a return of three and a half millions more than the last quarter of 1900; and the financial year ended with the receipts a little over the estimate. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach had budgeted for one hundred and forty-two and a half millions, and he received one hundred and forty-three millions. But the Budget must be another War Budget, with another war deficit; and the worst of the problem was that indirect taxation had been by now strained rather

[1] See *Punch*, "Essence of Parliament," 18th June 1902.

hard. The Chancellor of the Exchequer believed that the limit of profitable taxation had been reached on spirits; the consumption of both spirits and beer was falling; and indeed in every direction consumption appeared to be rather at a standstill. The Budget anticipated an income of one hundred and forty-seven and three quarter millions, and a deficit of forty-five and a half millions. Another loan of thirty-five millions was issued; and to raise the balance a penny more was put on the income-tax, the tea and sugar duties were raised, and a shilling duty was placed on imported corn and flour. Much more would probably have been heard about the last-named tax if the Chancellor of the Exchequer had not also proposed to raise the duty on cheques to twopence. This roused so much opposition that in the end, after several proposals for mitigation and rebates, the impost was withdrawn. The corn-tax was also helped by the protestations of the Government that it was only a "registration duty," and strictly a war-tax, not intended to be permanent. Even so, it became one more bond of possible union on the Liberal side. The Cobden Club woke to the old cry of the Corn Laws; and there was plenty to do in warning the country that taxes were not so easily taken off as put on. Mr Chamberlain was already speaking again about an Imperial Zollverein, and the corn-tax would be a useful item to bargain with. The Opposition recorded their hostility to the tax, and the Finance Bill had some stormy moments before it became law. Its last days in the Commons were ingeniously designed to coincide with the approach of the coronation, when a little matter like a shilling corn-duty was not likely to take public attention, least of all since the approach of the coronation itself coincided with the long looked-for declaration of peace, and therefore the end of war budgets.

Lord Kitchener had been firmly pursuing his method

of sweeping operations between lines of block-houses. A constant trickle, both of prisoners of war and burghers who came in to surrender, resulted. Some sixty different columns were operating in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony, varying in number from 200 men to 2000; and the columns worked generally in groups. The Boer commandos were under three principal leaders: Louis Botha, De Wet and Delarey. Small garrisons here and there were constantly attacked, convoys were struck at, the railways cut and trains blown up. Occasionally the Boers united suddenly into considerable forces, and captured guns and set the British newspapers to printing casualty lists of fifty and sixty killed. But the British had learned much by this time. Even the regiments of yeomanry, of which Lord Kitchener had had to complain, were acquiring skill and craft; and no Boer successes had any effects upon the final course of the operations. For many months past the war despatches had contained almost as many names of new troops as of the familiar old ones. Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders and South Africans were in nearly all the columns. Vigorously though hostilities were proceeding, strong as the Boers could yet show themselves to be at times, a sense of nearing the end was given by the commencement of civil reorganisation in South Africa in January. Depression at home had passed away; for whatever our occasional reverses might be, the main current of the war set steadily in an unmistakable direction. Commando after commando was broken up, and turned into mere batches of prisoners, seventy, a hundred or a hundred and fifty at a time. When in February Mr Chamberlain went to the Guildhall to receive the freedom of the City of London, he seemed to be very near his zenith. Popular at home, better known in other parts of the empire than any British statesman before him, he had gained greatly and lost

nothing by the war. Whatever blunders there had been, none were attributed to him. He gained even by these. Popular feeling had to have its idol; it could not find one in Lord Salisbury, remote and dignified; in Mr Balfour, a shade too cool and impenitent even in the eyes of his followers; in Lord Lansdowne or Mr Brodrick, who had to bear on their shoulders all the War Office failures. So idolisation turned to Mr Chamberlain. It did not, of course, turn merely by exclusion of others. Mr Chamberlain had all along been the prominent figure; and his ever-ready and ever-vigorous defences of his policy, his slashing ways of dealing with critics, either of himself or of his colleagues, the irrepressible energy with which he flung himself into every debate on the war, into public meetings on the war, above all into the election on the war, had naturally attached to his person all the "patriotic" enthusiasm. That the state of the War Office might have been a consideration to him before he pressed his policy quite so far—that he might have been a little more sure of the machinery before he put it in motion—this was no blot upon his position. Nor was the fact that slashing oratory is a dangerous intruder into foreign politics. He had arrived at the happy situation in which the negative side is only put into words by political opponents.

Now, as he drove to the Guildhall amid cheering crowds, he was on the crest of a wave which was not allowed to break ineffectually. Before the end of March it was known that the Boers who were still acting as a Transvaal Government, Schalk Burger, Reitz and others, had appeared at Middleburg, and asked to be forwarded to Pretoria to interview Lord Kitchener. From this time on there were constant rumours of peace, which became really excited when it was known that the redoubtable De Wet and Delarey, with Steyn, had also appeared at British outposts, in this case at Klerksdorp, and had been in conference with

the Transvaalers. When the whole party moved to Pretoria, on 11th April, hopes ran high ; and there was a readiness to be patient when it was announced a week later that the Boer leaders had gone back to the commandos to take counsel with them. A month passed, but the fighting now was very desultory. Two delegates had been chosen by each commando in the field, and the whole lot, numbering sixty-four, met at Vereeniging on 15th May, with the leaders and so many of the people of political importance in the late republics as were still in the two territories. There was another fortnight's delay, broken in England by occasional intimations which seemed to point in the right direction. On 22nd May it was announced that Lord Milner had gone to Pretoria to be ready to meet the Boer leaders. On 23rd May there was a Cabinet Council, and the hope was that it had been called to consider a settlement of terms. Practical certainty seemed to have arrived with Mr Balfour's statement in the House of Commons on 30th May, a Friday, that he " hoped to be able to make an announcement on Monday." Before Monday came England had the most welcome news : peace had been signed at Pretoria on the Saturday night, and the fact had been made public on the Sunday evening. The announcement was posted at the War Office at five o'clcok, and at six o'clock a huge streamer bearing the words " Peace is Proclaimed " was hung across the pillars of the Mansion House façade. On the Colonial Office the flag was hoisted ; but, as it was Sunday, no other public building showed this signal. The fact that it was Sunday did not, however, prevent the rejoicings of a crowd larger than any that had gathered since Mafeking night. This time there had been general expectation of the news, and many people had mustered in the centre of London on the chance ; again, as the news spread, thousands came in from the suburbs. The scenes were the more unusual because, there being no shops and no theatres open, the light was

more subdued than on a weekday, and the crowds surged more blackly over the roadways. Instead of the familiar Sunday hush of the City, there was a perpetual diffused clamour, the sound of songs, the squeak of toy trumpets and the rolling mutter of innumerable voices. Yet even those who came upon the commotion unexpectedly knew instantly its meaning.

For that night the simple fact was enough. Next morning the newspapers gave the terms of peace. The principal were : that the Boers acknowledged themselves subjects of the King, and laid down their arms ; that the prisoners taking the oath of allegiance should be returned to their homes as soon as possible ; that military government should speedily be succeeded by civil government, and ultimately by self-government ; that, while English was to be the official language, Dutch should be taught in the schools, and allowed in the courts ; that Boers should be permitted to own rifles on taking out licences ; that no special tax should be imposed on the territories ; and that assistance should be given for repatriating the exiled Boers, the British Government making a gift of three millions to hasten resettlement on the farms. The terms were conclusive ; British territory now stretched without question from Cape Town to the Zambesi—a single South Africa. It had been won at the cost, on our side, of two and a half years of fighting, 20,000 lives, and over two hundred millions of money. On the Boer side the cost was never so definitely known ; but Botha at Vereeniging had spoken of 3800 Boers killed, and over 31,000 taken prisoner. Some 20,000 now surrendered on the signature of peace. This came as a rather startling surprise to Englishmen who had spoken of the war as a mere trifle nine months earlier, and gave a new sense of what Lord Kitchener's task had been.

Nothing now remained to cloud the coming coronation. Indeed, it must be admitted that the war, even if prolonged,

could hardly have clouded it, so keen were the interest and the anticipation. This was to be such a coronation as no monarch ever had. The British Empire, as it stood, had practically come into existence since the last coronation. The colonies then had been distant, thinly populated for the most part, comparatively poor; now they were great countries, with premiers and ministers to represent them in Westminster Abbey, and troops to take their place among the forces of the Crown. India had then been a trading territory administered by a company. Communication had now grown so quick and easy that there was not a single small Crown colony which could not take its part in the coronation. So there mustered in London during May and June such an assemblage of dominion and power as had never in the world's history been witnessed. Camps sprang up in the parks, and alien regiments dwelt in the tents. Thus at Hampton Court were gathered soldiers of the Indian Empire—Sikhs, Goorkhas, Rajputs, with sentries on duty over cooking places lest the shadow of an infidel should defile the meat of the faithful. At Alexandra Park Colonial troops camped in their expert fashion, covering the slopes with their khaki and slouch hats. In Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park the turf was scored with the lines of the British regulars and volunteers; and Londoners never wearied of gazing at the streets of tents, the long rows of picketed horses, the parked waggons and guns. Elsewhere gathered the strangest regiments of all, Hausas from West Africa; Chinese from Singapore; Malays; and Fiji police, their bushes of hair coloured with yellow earth.

In June too began to arrive the great personages who were to represent the Empire. Premiers came from the self-governing colonies, to be greeted with all the popular enthusiasm for the work of Colonial troops in the war; and governors from the Crown colonies. Maharajahs and

princes from India, some of them already well known in London, others here for the first time, dazzled drawing-rooms with the clicking glitter of their ropes and tassels and gorgets of jewels. One great maharajah, whose caste was so precious that none of his line had ever yet left India, landed at Tilbury Docks with row upon row of huge brass pots filled with soil of India and water of the Ganges. Lastly, two overwhelming days brought to Victoria Station the representatives of foreign powers, and special trains disgorged a royal personage at every six feet of the platform. King Edward had taken a holiday in the spring, yachting on the south-west coast, and visiting Cornwall and the Scilly Islands. He had since been keeping fairly quiet; but in June he had begun his own part in the celebrations by attending a great review at Aldershot. There was some concern when it was seen that on the next day, Sunday, he was not present at church parade, and it was announced that he was confined to his room, suffering from lumbago caused by a chill. Rumours as to his health, which followed, were roundly denied; but when, on 23rd June, he arrived in London with the Queen, none who saw him make the brief passage from the railway saloon to the carriage in which he was conveyed to the palace could be quite content with the official denials. The King obviously leaned heavily on his stick, and he looked pale and unlike his kindly, gracious self. London as a whole only saw him seated in the carriage. Yet even those who had seen some cause for anxiety had seen none for alarm. The news published on the morning of 24th June came like a bomb. Not only was the King ill, but he was so seriously ill that the surgeons had had to perform immediately an operation for perityphlitis. The coronation was postponed. The operation had been successful, but for the present the surgeons could say no more. With his courage and his dislike of disappointing his people, the King had struggled on in the hope of being

able to bear the fatigue of the coronation. Now the decorations and the mustered troops and the splendid strangers were left unnoticed behind the backs of the crowds that grew and melted and grew again all day long in front of the palace railings, whereon hung the small red boards with the white bulletins upon them. For five days the gravest uncertainty lasted. Then on 29th June it was announced that the King's life was no longer in danger.

The royal guests from abroad had gone back. But there was now the prospect of a coronation once more, and the troops of the empire were to wait in London for it. It became an amusement again to walk the decorated streets. Not that these showed much of originality or fineness in design; the most original thing, the Canadian Arch in Whitehall, with its masses of wheat and apples and its tinselly cupolas, strung with electric lights of an evening, was not beautiful, and soon became tiresome. By the King's wish all the celebrations that could go forward were carried out: the festivities in the towns and villages, and the King's dinner to the poor, and the Queen's tea to general servants. In July the King was well enough to go to Cowes for final recuperation.

By that time there had been some shifting of the figures that would play a prominent part in the coronation. For one thing, Lord Kitchener would now be at home in time for it. He reached London on 12th July, with his new honours of a viscounty, the rank of General, and a grant of £50,000; and was met at Paddington by the Prince of Wales, with whom he drove to luncheon at St James's Palace. General French and General Ian Hamilton came to London in his company. But it was Lord Kitchener that the crowds came out to see; and more than ever they cheered the grave man, his blue eyes so light in the deep bronze of his face that they looked like the eyeballs of a statue.

A greater change was caused by the fact that, on 13th

July, Lord Salisbury resigned the premiership. "The last great statesman of the Victorian era" [1] was not, after all, to stand as Prime Minister at the coronation of King Edward. Mr Balfour succeeded him. It was a natural and inevitable succession; yet it can hardly have taken place in this quiet, simple fashion without affording Mr Chamberlain food for thought. No man stood so much in the public eye as he did. He had just come to the success of the greatest venture on which the country had ever been embarked by one man. The Conservative party at the crisis had really hung upon his power with the populace. There must have seemed to him to be something impenetrable and almost uncanny in the inability to make the final step to power. Mr Balfour had to carry out some reconstruction of the Ministry. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach resigned the Exchequer, and was succeeded by Mr Ritchie; Mr Austen Chamberlain became Postmaster-General; and Lord Dudley Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; Sir John Gorst gave up the Board of Education (an act which in the middle of the Education Bill's career could only be interpreted as a confession of failure), and was succeeded by Sir William Anson.

On 6th August the King returned to London, strong and debonair, the King that everyone knew so well by sight, and not the worn figure of two months earlier. On the 9th he was crowned in Westminster Abbey. No detail of the day, from the troops in the procession to the symbolism of the garments he wore for the solemnity, from the night-long vigil of the crowd to the preparations in the Abbey, was too small for record in the newspapers. And when the King and Queen returned from the Abbey, even a crowd that already loved to label itself "Twentieth Century" in its advancement and sophistication, thrilled at the spectacle of a King and Queen actually wearing great crowns.

[1] *The Times*, 14th July 1902.

One more occasion remained for excitement. The reviews and parades of the Indian and Colonial contingents took place in Buckingham Palace Gardens, and so were witnessed only by the privileged. But the Naval Review, though it suffered in some respects from the postponement, was for all to see. It happened to coincide with the arrival in England of the three most prominent leaders of the Boers in the field during the past two years: Botha, De Wet and Delarey. As they came up the Solent in the early morning of 16th August they passed the ends of the long lines of warships, a whole world of the power of England that they had hardly come in contact with at all. Lord Kitchener went on board their ship to meet them, and conveyed them to another ship on which Mr Chamberlain and Lord Roberts had embarked for the review. They were introduced to Mr Chamberlain and Lord Roberts, and were then invited to remain and see the review. They declined, and went on to London. There they must have been as puzzled by the spirit that met them as perhaps they had been by the invitation on the moment of landing to stay and witness alongside Mr Chamberlain a display of the power and wealth of their conquerors. Even without bearing grudges or malice, these three grave burly men must have felt London remote from seriousness, when staring easy-minded crowds ran to cheer them in the streets, and shout after them words of patronising admiration. What, they may have asked themselves, was the nature of a country which could sit so lightly to five and fifty months of war that the men who had strained her to the utmost were no more to her than new toys? When the three failed to respond with equally facile smiles and bows, the public, chilled in its gratified sense of openhanded cancelling of bygones, began to ask contemptuously if the three fighting men were going to throw in a sullen and resentful lot with Mr Kruger and Dr Leyds. It was the old habit of swinging from mood to mood. The generals

went over to Rotterdam almost immediately, returning to London later on for consultations with Mr Chamberlain and Lord Kitchener at the Colonial Office on the resettlement of the conquered territories.

A great many people in England resented the sentimentalism of the London crowd, and would have sympathised with the Boer generals' feelings. Though the cry for efficiency was thrust into the background by the excitements of the year, the movement went on. Mr Kipling flung his reputation into it, in a way that almost lost him his popularity, He published in January a poem called *The Islanders*, full of scorn for a people that preferred games and sport to equipping itself for war, that boasted of empire, but made no personal effort to preserve it. One line in the poem, " flannelled fools at the wicket, or muddied oafs at the goals," was all that it was necessary to remember ; it contained the heart of his reproach, and also the deeply resented scornfulness of tone. Englishmen were by this time a little wearied of the admirable example of the colonies and of Colonial troops. Yet it was no wonder if a man with a gift for picturesque expression found himself impelled to make use of it. The war seemed now to have made so little difference ; and those who had expected a national regeneration looked round in despair. They saw the rich overwhelmed by a positive mania for bridge ; the guardsman or cavalryman, when he came home from campaigning, seemed to make a point of picking life up casually just where he had left off, sitting down to take a hand of an afternoon, or a morning, or an evening, just as if there was no Empire. More infuriating still to the strenuous was the mania for ping-pong, a sort of table tennis, which, beginning with the middle class, had spread upwards with astonishing rapidity, and devastated evening parties. Even in its patriotic manifestations the crowd exasperated the searchers for efficiency. On the one hand it could not even produce a passable comic song for

pavement use (we are hardly now able to recall the feeble idiocy of "We'll all be merry on Coronation Day"); and on the other hand it could not rejoice without bringing to the surface a lot of wastrel youths, who in other countries would have been undergoing their period of military service.

The attack on the trade unions continued no less vigorously. They were charged with limiting output (on the "Ca' canny" principle), and articles appeared contrasting the number of bricks a man could lay in a day with the number of bricks a trade unionist actually would lay.[1] Employers complained that they were hampered in tendering for contracts by the stipulations which public bodies made for the employment of union labour, or the payment of union wages. Public bodies replied that they were justified in taking every precaution against the delaying of contracts by strikes. Again, employers fell under criticism for inefficiency in their relations with their men; they did not encourage new ideas, or do anything to make the workmen take a living interest in the business. They aimed at altering trade union law, instead of defending themselves by combination and a system of profit-sharing with their workmen. But no one offered any suggestion based on the truth of the new situation which the last fifteen years had brought about in industry. Each master had practically, under the Limited Liability Acts, become in his own person a combination of capital; and if these combinations were to combine, trade unions naturally aimed at a General Federation in response. Incidental criticisms cut at various angles into the main controversy. Mr John Burns defended workmen from the charge of limiting output, but told them at the same time that there was a good deal in the complaints of their inefficiency, while they spent so much health and money in drink and

[1] *The Times*, 10th March 1902.

gambling. Others complained of the Board of Trade Labour Department as a sham, politically one-sided, and not trusted by employers as a conciliatory medium. Even such a matter as the closing down of the steamer service on the Thames was regarded as another piece of inefficiency: London had not the sense to make use of her river as other capitals did.

A certain response to criticism of the mind of labour was made by the foundation of the Workers' Educational Association. This was an attempt to grapple in a new way with the difficulty of bringing university education within the outlook of the artisan. Ruskin Hall had become by this time something more than an experiment. But it had not solved the difficulty. For one thing, its students showed some tendency to quarrel with the whole tone of Oxford education, as a middle-class tone, and to wish rather to inform the university than be informed by it. Besides, the hall could not accommodate many men; and the time seemed to have come for a new effort. The Workers' Educational Association aimed at bringing the universities to working people, instead of sending working people to the universities. Its purpose was to organise extension classes in a more systematic way than had hitherto been attempted; to create a co-operation between pupils and lecturers, which should lead to more profitable selection of courses of instruction; to give a more deliberate continuity to those courses; and to create between the lecturer and his class in a manufacturing town a relation more akin to that between tutors and pupils in a university. The association received the support of trade union leaders, and no less warm support from university authorities. For a few years its progress was rather slow; the *Intransigeants* of Ruskin Hall had not ineffectually decried the "orthodox" history and economics of university teachers. But the association had patient and enthusiastic service behind it; and

before the end of our period it numbered over one hundred branches and over 3000 students.

In learning and science we were not doing so badly. The founding of the British Academy early in the year was an easy subject for jests; but a roll which included Lord Acton, Mr Lecky, Mr Bryce, Mr Balfour, Mr Morley, such professors as S. R. Gardiner, Pelham, J. B. Bury, Jebb, Robinson Ellis, Bywater, Munro, S. G. Butcher, Dicey, Holland and Maitland, and antiquarians like Lord Dillon and Mr Arthur Evans, was one worth drawing up, even if the British genius might be held not to favour academies. Unfortunately one great name was too soon to drop out of the roll; Lord Acton died in July. He had as an historian done much to reinstate the infinitely patient collection and sifting of evidence; and his lectures at Cambridge were mines generously laid open for the digging of others. His own work had a dignity and detachment which set as fine an example as his laborious habits of research. He had during his life amassed a library of the rarest value for such research. He was, however, not a rich man, and had been obliged to make preparations to sell it. Mr Carnegie stepped in, and bought the whole 70,000 volumes, leaving them in Lord Acton's hands for his life. Now at his death Mr Carnegie requested Mr Morley to take the responsibility for it; and Mr Morley found a happy end to the trust by offering the library to the university of Cambridge, where it remains as the one memorial to Lord Acton which he himself would most have wished for. Another member of the Academy, Mr Arthur Evans, was just now discovering that very Minoan palace at Cnossus which no one had expected him to find.[1] Professor Dewar and others were making most important experiments with gases at extremely low temperatures. Nor could there be any complaint about the use of scientific methods in medical practice. Systematic investiga-

[1] See p. 116.

tion of cancer had progressed so far that a scheme was started for raising a fund of £100,000 for the purpose. The treatment of tuberculosis was greatly forwarded by King Edward's application of a gift of £200,000 (at first anonymous, but soon known to be Sir Edward Cassel's) to be spent on a sanatorium.

The demand for efficiency had begun, simply enough, from the contemplation of our scrambling entry upon what proved to be a long and complicated war. From that, and from the anxiety about hooliganism, grew the foundation this year of the National Service League, for the advocacy of compulsory military training. But another element was now creeping in, and that which had begun in our own consciences was kept alive by a spectre of more or less hostile rivalry. National feeling between England and Germany had taken a disagreeable turn. In the previous year it had seemed probable that of all the Continental comment on the war, which had been hard to bear and bitterly resented, that from Germany would be the soonest forgotten. The promptness with which the German Emperor acknowledged family claims at Queen Victoria's death has been mentioned.[1] The action of King Edward in making him a Field-Marshal in the British army, and in investing the German Crown Prince with the Order of the Garter, had been well received; and more intimate relations between the two countries seemed about to be set up. Yet even then comparisons were at work between the British and the German navies, of a tone sufficiently indicated by the conclusion that the question was not one of comparative tons of commerce, or pounds sterling of naval expenditure, but one simply of Great Britain's security at sea.[2] While the ultimate trend of our relations with Germany was still in question, Mr Chamberlain made, in November 1901, a speech in which,

[1] See p. 126.

[2] *The Times*, 8th February 1901.

discussing the possibility of our having been too lenient in the later stages of hostilities, and too little inclined to act on the principle that guerillas were not entitled to the honourable provisions of war, he had referred to the Franco-German campaign, and the treatment of the *francs-tireurs*. Mr Chamberlain never appeared at his best in his references to other nations, and his words provoked an outburst of violent replies from Germany. The German Chancellor took up Mr Chamberlain's remarks sharply in the Reichstag, and other hot speeches followed. This was in January 1902—so vigorously had the German newspapers kept up their comments. Great projects for the extension of the German navy were in the circumstances likely to be used here to raise still more the spectre of rivalry. Anything in Mr Brodrick's army schemes that had an air of being borrowed from Germany came in for sarcastic notice; and he himself became a butt when he went to attend the German manœuvres with Lord Roberts, wearing a yeomanry uniform of khaki. The German Emperor was again in England in the autumn, staying with Lord Lonsdale, and going to shoot at Sandringham. He certainly showed, both by his visit and his invitation to Mr Brodrick and Lord Roberts, every indication of a desire to override the heated newspaper exchanges.

Mr Brodrick and the War Office generally were given uncomfortable moments whenever the public had attention to spare. The Commission on the War Hospitals had reported in 1901, finding that, while the Royal Army Medical Corps had done what it could, it was deficient in strength, organisation and training, and was imperfectly equipped; it was undermanned and overworked; and it ought to have been provided long ago with a special sanitary branch. The Commission on Army Contracts was still sitting. Then a fresh storm broke about the Remount Department. It had, of course, been known

to the public in a general way that, even when we had learned in South Africa the immense value of mounted men, our generals had been unable to put the lesson into practice, because they could not get horses quickly, or get good ones at all, from the department responsible for remounts. Stories had been current, too, of the pedantic requirements of remount officers; and of horses refused for some red-tape reason. Early in the session of 1902 the matter suddenly took a more serious turn. In an apparently innocent debate on some supplementary estimates, it was charged against the War Office that a most extensive "deal" in horses from Hungary had been ludicrously mismanaged; we had paid hundreds of thousands away for horses at £35 apiece, which turned out to be next to useless, and were known later to have been acquired by the dealers for £10 apiece or less. In September a Royal Commission was appointed, with sweeping terms of reference. It was "to inquire into the military preparations for the war in South Africa, and into the supply of men, ammunition and equipment, and transport by sea and land in connection with the campaign; and into the military operations up to the occupation of Pretoria." The commissioners were Lord Elgin, Lord Esher, Field-Marshal Sir Henry Norman, Sir George Taubman Goldie, Admiral Sir John Hopkins, and two prominent men of business, Sir John Edge and Sir John Jackson. The public would have preferred a commission with rather more men of business on it. But it was satisfied with the terms of reference, and the decision of the commissioners to sit in private promised a less delicate procedure than would have been likely in public.

Meanwhile efficiency was at work in the navy. Under Lord Selborne a new scheme was set on foot for training officers, with due regard to the importance of the machinery in a modern ship; it was intended to procure more inter-

change and interaction between the executive and the engineering branches.

Uneasiness about our business supremacy received a double shock in the autumn, from two great operations of American capitalists. One threatened to sweep the whole retail tobacco trade into an American trust. There had arisen during the year a violent competition between American and British tobacco manufacturers for the custom of the retailers. The immense spread of cigarette-smoking had filled the shops with packets of cheap cigarettes; and it now came out that American firms were pushing their goods by offering the retailers bonuses in addition to the regular profits. There ensued a period of frantic counter-bidding, the bonuses finally reaching a figure at which even the biggest manufacturers began to quail. But the Americans were combined in a trust; and unless the British combined they must ultimately be forced into surrender, and join the trust. The Imperial Tobacco Company was formed, taking in large businesses like Players', Ogden's and Wills's; and it was just in time to save a few other British firms from coming under the American trust. Several had already joined it. The two trusts came to an agreement, and the bonus war ended. The affair would have attracted much less attention had it not coincided with a far more colossal American stroke. As early as May a debate had arisen in the House of Commons in regard to a combination in the North American shipping trade. A "pool" had been in process of formation, so enormous that it threatened to transfer the control of our Atlantic lines—by far the greater portion of our shipping, and the newest and fastest—to American hands. What made the case worse was that the German Atlantic lines, which the "pool" had attempted to draw in, had apparently shown more independence in making their terms than our own. Ultimately the Board of Trade was able to announce that the

British ships in the combination were to remain under British control, and the British flag, and were to carry a proportion of British officers and men, as the Government might require; at least half of the new shipping of the combination was always to be British; and the British ships were to remain, as before, subject to the British Government, and to rights of temporary acquisition by the Government. The Cunard Line, which remained outside the combination, was to receive a special subsidy of £150,000 a year, and a loan for building two new fast ships. Thus the American deal became a purely trading agreement, and the worst of public alarm was soothed. But it remained a little humiliating; and the immense amount of the combination's capital, said to be twenty-four millions, all found by persons interested, was hardly consoling.

The House met for an autumn session on the Education Bill, to find that the restoration of affairs to the old party shapes had proceeded swiftly in the recess. There had been a tremendous campaign against the Education Bill on the Liberal side, and the Nonconformist support of the Liberal party had been drastically pulled together. Already refusal to pay rates was in the air. On the Tory side there was some anxiety, and a disposition to make concessions, the chief outcome of which was the Kenyon-Slaney amendment, strengthening outside control in the management of voluntary schools. But no concessions could meet the complete objection of Nonconformists to the support of definite Church instruction. So strong was the Opposition to the Bill that it was pushed forward by severe forms of closure. It became law before the end of the year. Thereupon the refusal to pay rates was launched as a definite campaign; and the Act promised to continue that process of reuniting Liberals which it had already begun. The bond provided by attacks upon it had made itself evident in the summer, when Lord Rose-

bery had displayed less inclination to criticise publicly the Liberal Front Bench; and Sir Edward Grey had intimated that the "clean slate" had not been intended to be *quite* clean. Lord Rosebery had even gone so far towards extreme Radicalism as to tell a meeting of Nonconformists in December that, if they submitted to the Act, they would have ceased to exist politically. They happened to lose in this year two very prominent leaders, Dr Joseph Parker and Mr Hugh Price Hughes. The former had been a notable preacher, able to gather to the City Temple crowds of busy City men on a weekday, as well as his congregations of Sunday. The latter had been an earnest social worker, but at the same time more active in political questions than Dr Parker. He had been the most notable Nonconformist to take the side of the war party in the recent controversies. Liberal polls at by-elections in the late autumn in the Cleveland and East Toxteth divisions had been most encouraging. Lastly, the debates on the Bill had shown that the Opposition, if numerically weak, had fighting power; Mr Lloyd George had greatly consolidated his reputation.

Besides the Education Bill, the Government passed the London Water Bill, setting up a separate body to which the water companies' undertakings were to pass. It introduced an Irish Land Purchase Bill, enabling landlords to sell their estates whole to the Land Commission, if not less than three-quarters of the tenantry wished to purchase; payment was to be by cash, and not in Land Stock. The Bill was dropped; but its appearance tended to keep down agitation in Ireland, and after it had disappeared the air was full of talk of conferences and compromises, one scheme, propounded by Captain Shawe-Taylor, even suggesting a conference between Irish landlords and Irish tenants. The mere suggestion was a far cry from the ideas of twenty years back.

Another measure of the session was a Licensing Bill.

It was not a striking measure; but Lord Salisbury's refusal in 1900 to take any action on the Licensing Commission's report had given so much offence to leaders of Church opinion that, for fear of losing the support of the clergy, the Government no doubt decided that it must delay no longer. The Bill contained provisions for putting clubs under registration; and for giving the justices control of grocers' licences; and some further proposals as to habitual drunkards. The previous year had seen the publication of the first report on Certified Retreats under the Inebriates Act of 1898; and it had on the whole been encouraging. But it had spoken of a good many relapses; and an attempt was now made to "black list" habitual drunkards, who had been committed to retreats, and to forbid publicans to serve them with liquor. In truth this year's Bill was hopelessly out of date. Licensing reform, proceeding on another route, had left such proposals a long way in the rear. The famous Farnham licensing cases, and the Birmingham agreements, had become by the autumn of 1902 the centre of interest. Lord Salisbury, in refusing to act on the commission's report, had certainly underestimated the feeling in favour of a reduction of licences. This was proved by the movement that now took place among the justices. At Farnham there had been the extraordinary proportion of one licensed house to every 124 persons. The licensing justices attempted to reduce the number by negotiation; and when that failed they took their stand on the Sharp *v.* Wakefield decision,[1] and refused to renew eight licences. The licence-holders appealed to Quarter Sessions. In two cases renewal was ordered, on certain conditions; in the other six the justices' decision was upheld. In Birmingham, chiefly owing to the activity of Mr Arthur Chamberlain, a strong reduction movement had also been going on; but here

[1] See vol. i., p. 271.

negotiation was more successful. Ninety-nine licences were the subject of negotiation, and the brewers agreed to surrender fifty-one. In Liverpool also there had been reductions, assisted by insurance of licences having been in practice here; and at Nottingham. As so often happens in England, local procedure seemed likely to be caught up and generalised into a system. The failure of the Bill of 1902 to propose anything in the way of reduction of licences had strengthened the feeling that the justices must act for themselves; and in the Farnham cases their action was pretty generally approved.[1] But brewing firms were not unnaturally alarmed. They had only succeeded, by the Farnham appeal, in strengthening the justices again. They had raised the question whether licensing justices sat as a court of law or as an administrative body. The point was important, because, if they sat as a court of law, they could only hear evidence on cases brought before them; whereas, sitting as an administrative body, they could act entirely on their own initiative. The appeal led to the decision that they sat purely as an administrative body.

Another movement which, if less immediately alarming to licence-holders, yet showed the wide area of inclination towards temperance, was the starting in 1901 of the Public House Trust, the object of which was to secure licences on a principle of disinterested management. No profit was looked for beyond a sum sufficient to pay five per cent. on the capital invested; so that there need be no encouragement to drinking. More money would go to improving the amenities of the houses, and tea and other such drinks were to be kept as much in the foreground as intoxicating liquors. The trust, which was headed by Lord Grey, was organised by counties, and was already drawing to itself much of the moderate opinion on licensing questions.

[1] See *The Times*, 4th October 1902.

The end of the year was overcast by a depression of trade and a grave lack of employment. Wages had been falling generally; and the metal, shipbuilding and engineering trades especially were on a down-grade for the first time since 1894.[1] The return of reservists from the war added to the distress; and the winter opened badly. Nor was peace much less costly for the moment than war. In November Parliament had voted eight millions of money for South Africa, three as a free gift to repatriated Boers, two in aid of distressed loyalists in the old colonies, and three for loans to be used in the organisation of the new colonies. Before the end of the year 21,000 prisoners of war had been returned, and the numbers in the concentration camps had fallen from 103,000 to 34,000. But the disastrous disturbance caused by the war was only slowly revealing its extent; and it seemed likely that more money would be called for. Everything possible was done to hasten the transport of machinery to reopen the Rand mines after their three years of idleness; but here the difficulty which had made its appearance two years earlier grew formidable. In August the proposal to meet the shortage of labour for the mines by importing Chinese began to be discussed. It was at first coldly received. The mine-owners were told that the Kaffir problem was serious enough, without being complicated by a Chinese problem. The other colonies, which had done so much to make the Rand British territory, were angrily amazed at a proposal to import the very kind of coolie labour which they had all made up their minds to shut out. White labourers out of work complained bitterly of the refusal to employ them, although Mr Cresswell, the manager of the Village Main Reef mine, asserted that 250 white men would do the work of 900 Kaffirs; the suspicion was that the objection to white men was their proneness to join trade unions. As for the

[1] Board of Trade Report on Wages, published 29th August 1902.

Kaffirs, the mine-owners declared that labour-recruiting among them was tiresome and unsatisfactory. For the time being, however, the question fell into abeyance, because it was announced in October that Mr Chamberlain was proposing to visit South Africa, and study on the spot all the problems rising out of the war. The King gave his approval; the *Good Hope*, a new armoured cruiser just in commission, was placed at Mr Chamberlain's service; and he started off almost in state. He may well have been glad to leave the Education Bill behind him; but events were to show that he dropped out of more than the Education Bill.

CHAPTER IX

1903 : MR CHAMBERLAIN'S HIGH BID

THE next year opened in a rather sober mind. Trade was giving signs of slight recovery, especially in iron and steel and textiles; but it was too slight to be exhilarating as yet. The revenue showed lowered consuming power. The stock markets remained under a cloud; for the failure of the Whittaker Wright companies, occurring, as it did, just when the war would in any case have caused a shortage of money for speculation, had proved to be even more disastrous than was anticipated. It was now two years since the first announcement of failure. Nearly twelve months had been spent on investigating the affairs of the London & Globe Finance Corporation alone, before the Official Receiver could issue even his first report. There were two other principal companies and some minor ones to be investigated; and as another twelve months passed it became increasingly clear that the position of the shareholders was extremely bad. The financial operations between the various companies were far too complicated for the ordinary person to follow; but there were City men fully convinced that these operations had been of a kind that should bring Mr Whittaker Wright to the dock. Shareholders were ready enough to accept this view; and during 1902 there had been constant expressions of indignation at the inaction of the Public Prosecutor. Finally, a private committee of City men was formed, and a prosecution fund of £5000 was raised. When Parliament met, one more attempt was made to move the law authorities

of the Crown; but both the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General remained of the opinion that the materials for a prosecution were inadequate. The difficulty of tracking out exactly what had happened was so extreme that a prosecution might break down on some technical point; and in that case more harm than good would have been done, since the suggestion would have been conveyed that financial juggling, if only sufficiently complicated, and on large enough scale, could be practised with immunity. However, the prosecution committee had seven good legal opinions on their side. They made application in the regular way to the High Court, and early in March Mr Justice Buckley ordered the Official Receiver to prosecute Mr Whittaker Wright. These were not events calculated to assist the speculative spirit in the city; and the Stock Exchange felt no breath of better times.

The nation fingered ruefully its already lean pocket when telegrams came from South Africa reporting promises made by Mr Chamberlain out there. Speaking at Johannesburg, on 18th January, he informed his audience that the British Government would undertake a loan of thirty-five millions, floated with the Government's guarantee, and secured on the assets of the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony. It would be spent in paying off the debts of the late republics, in expropriating the existing railways, and building new ones, and in forwarding land settlement. True, Mr Chamberlain announced at the same time that the Transvaal would pay thirty millions towards the cost of the war, ten of them being subscribed by leading financiers, and the remaining twenty placed on the market. But this was regarded as a rather illusory contribution. The net upshot of the whole transaction was that fifty-five millions more would be dumped upon a market longing to be free of those masses of national stock, and to return to flutters

of its own. Meanwhile daily processions of the unemployed, carrying collecting-boxes, in the London streets did not look like any immediate return of trade elasticity.

Parliament reassembled without much expectation of renewal of the great contests of the previous year. The Education Act was to be extended by a separate Bill to London. That admiration for the school boards which had been quick to express itself on the introduction of the Bill of 1902 was even stronger in this particular case; the London Board had been in old days the one really efficient form of local government that London could boast, and of recent years it had been in the forefront of education. But it could not be left an exception to a universal scheme; and the Opposition could not fight a subordinate measure as keenly as they had fought the general principle. Moreover, the battle was now raging outside Parliament, and the real progress of the cause of the Opposition was in the country. Refusal of rates, "passive resistance" to the Bill [1] was in full cry; and the Government would clearly have to face the odium of prosecutions which could be represented as persecutions of conscience. Besides the London Education Bill the measures expected during the session were a Port of London Bill and, as the great item, an Irish Land Purchase Bill. A Royal Commission had reported on the Port of London in 1902, recommending the establishment of a public authority; but no proposal was made in this year, and in fact the subject was to wait for five years before it was undertaken. The Irish Land Purchase Bill promised a good passage. There had actually been a conference in Dublin, though not quite of the kind projected

[1] This phrase did not appear now for the first time. Disraeli, in *Sybil*, writes of the possibility of a "passive resistance Jacquerie," among the starved and ill-housed peasantry of England.

by Captain Shawe-Taylor.[1] Lord Dunraven and Lord Mayo had met Mr John Redmond, Mr William O'Brien, Mr T. W. Russell, and Mr Harrington ; and the principle of the buying-out of owners seemed likely to offer no serious difficulties. The only obstacle would be the cost. The Bill proposed purchase on a much greater scale than had hitherto been attempted, and the question was whether, after all the large Government loans of the war time, millions could profitably be raised for Ireland. Mr Wyndham, the Chief Secretary, put the figure at twelve millions ; but it became very clear in the course of the debates that this would not be the limit. However, the floating of the Transvaal loan was such an unexpected success that there was less anxiety as to putting the Irish stock on the market when the time should come.

There seemed to be little opportunity for the Liberals to exercise their growing strength. Irish land purchase they could hardly oppose ; and it suited them better to look on while some of the Irish landlords expressed their far from friendly feelings for a Unionist Government producing such a Bill. It was simpler to make capital out of attacking Mr Brodrick's army schemes. The " phantom army corps " had become a public jest ; the real army corps were obviously going to cost a great deal of money, and increase permanently the Army Estimates. Recruiting was being bolstered up by methods not at all satisfactory ; the requirements as to height and chest measurements had been relaxed, and weedy recruits were nicknamed " Brodricks." Reform of details, such as changes in the pattern of soldiers' caps, was peculiarly open to ridicule, while more important reforms seemed to be in suspension. Mr Winston Churchill, who was entering on his third session, having been returned as Conservative member for Oldham at the 1900 election, made himself prominent in these attacks. The question

[1] See p. 174.

of labour in the Transvaal mines offered as yet no particular foothold to Liberals. It was raised on an amendment moved by Sir Charles Dilke to the Consolidated Fund Bill at the end of March. By that time Mr Chamberlain was at home again, having landed in England on 14th March, and he was in his place in the House to deal with the question. He had taken a perfectly clear line in a speech at Johannesburg in January. He had told the mine-owners that there was a strong current of opinion against the importation of Chinese labour, both at home and in the colonies; he expressed the belief that the mine-owners had not sufficiently worked out the problem, and would be well advised to see what could be done, by means of improved machinery and the employment of white labour, to bridge over the present shortage of black labour. Now in the House of Commons he was equally clear about the objection of the colonists to Chinese labour. But he gave less weight to the objection of the mother country; and implied that, if the colonists most concerned, those in South Africa, should change their mind, the Government neither could nor would interfere. However, this drew no particular attention. A mass meeting at Johannesburg protested vigorously against any introduction of Asiatics; and the matter was not seriously regarded.

The Budget was awaited with flat dreariness. The war was over, but its burdens were not. The income-tax payer hoped for a little relief, but did not expect much; and, if he got any, what new experiments in broadening the basis of taxation might be looked for? Sir Michael Hicks-Beach had been speaking, in his retirement, as if the national revenue was rather at a standstill, and yet national expenditure of the normal kind could not but rise. Where was the necessary resiliency to be found? The revenue returns stood at £633,000 below the estimate; but for the falling-in during the year of the duties on a great millionaire's estate, that of Colonel McCalmont, the figures

would have been much worse. After all, the Budget was better than the forecasts. No less than fourpence was taken off the income-tax. Yet Mr Ritchie's arrangements for the Sinking Fund were sound enough to please the City, and to prevent any appearance of bidding for popularity at the cost of prudence. The shilling corn-tax was also taken off. There were murmurs from some quarters. A Protectionist party was still represented in the House by Mr James Lowther and Mr Chaplin; and their complaints about this disregard for continuity in financial policy were prompt. Mr Balfour, however, receiving later on a deputation representing these views, was quite firm in maintaining the official attitude of the moment when the tax was imposed—that it had been put on for war purposes, and had instantly become so much a bone of contention that it could not be regarded as a permanent item of the country's fiscal policy. He went a good deal further when he added that Protection could not possibly be introduced into that policy silently, without a distinct vote from the country. The corn-tax had been a registration duty; and it was now represented, by certain agricultural interests, as of value to them. The truth behind the disappointment was that Sir Michael Hicks-Beach's gloomy views of the limit of elasticity in indirect taxation had produced a good deal of discussion of a broadening which should even extend to moderate all-round duties. This was very largely not a Protectionist but a genuine financial theory. It was at least open to argument that markets in England were becoming too cheap. In one respect, while there were so many unemployed and ill-paid workers, living could not be too cheap, But the increase of money in circulation had combined with business enterprise, advertisement and competitive transport, to enlarge extraordinarily the workman's range of purchase. Tinned foods and chilled meat were added to our already cheap loaf; and the great trading stores which had arisen in the

eighties for the middle classes had been copied in immense grocery concerns which by sticking to the stores system of cash purchases and by acting through a very large number of branch shops—most of all, perhaps, by being their own manufacturers and wholesale dealers—were able to cut profits very small. Clothes and boots, by the gradual perfection of machinery, had become worth selling cheaply in the modern rapid circulation of money. Oil had been cheapened by the standardising tendency of a great American trust looking for unchecked sales. Vegetables and fruit had come within the reach of town dwellers of a class that twenty years before would never have indulged in such things. Here again the use of cold chambers for transport had brought about a change; it was now worth while to send to England, in quantities large enough to make a cheap market, perishable stuff that had formerly been limited to the home-grown. Apples had for many years now poured in at all seasons; the imports had first become astonishing in 1891, when the quantity from Tasmania alone rose suddenly from 8798 bushels to 64,034 bushels, and other colonies saw the opening for their produce. Since then it had dawned upon the big merchants that money only had to be looked for—that if they chose to stock a market they could be sure of a return. Thus grapes, even pineapples, tomatoes, and other fruits which were once hothouse delicacies, appeared on the costers' barrows; and so firm had this kind of market become that a regular mail service to the island of Jamaica, a boon long desired by the inhabitants, had been inaugurated largely in the assurance that bananas could be sold in such quantities, once they were fairly on the streets, as to become an unfailingly profitable cargo. The middle class, gaining equally by the cheapness of food supplies, showed in other ways that mere housekeeping had become a small item of its expenditure. The craze just now for what was generically described as "Arts and Crafts" furni-

ture—partly a translation into dealers' terms of William Morris's designs, partly an importation of modern German and Austrian designing—meant that middle-class families were replacing their fathers' and grandfathers' furniture by new roomfuls from top to bottom of their houses. Even expensive toys like mechanical piano-players, which were first advertised heavily in this year, found their most numerous purchasers among the middle class, since the hire system played so large a part in the sales. Again, a matter like that of "capping" at hunts, which became an established custom in 1903, points in the same direction; it meant that numbers of people were able to afford hunting who did not belong to the old hunting sets, and so did not attach themselves to a single hunt, and become subscribers.

It seems quite probable that, if no one had generalised about the process, the pressure of growing expenditure upon Chancellors of the Exchequer with no gift for fundamental reconsideration of taxing would have brought about a definite enlargement of the tariff list. Each Chancellor was confronted with a community steadily spending on a wider range of both necessaries and luxuries; but not capable of more than a certain elasticity in the narrow range of dutiable goods. Moreover, there were a good many Liberals who felt that the readiness of the workman to applaud a war was partly due to his escape from direct taxation, such as the income-tax, and the comparatively small impost laid on him by the existing area of indirect taxes. But now a generalisation was made, and in such a way, and by such a man, that the whole matter ceased to be one of making ends meet at the Exchequer, and became a struggle on root-principles.

Mr Chamberlain had spoken more than once, since he took the Colonial Office and began to make colonial subjects of importance to political audiences, of the reality which might be given to our relations with the colonies by

a tariff agreement, such as existed between the various states of the United States, or between the countries of the German Empire. His first speech to his constituents after his return from South Africa was made on 15th May. He put forward at more length than he had yet done a plea for the establishment of preferential tariffs within the empire. At present we left the colonies to fight the battle of our markets without any favour; we were obliged to submit to their tariffs, because, if they lowered them in our favour, foreign countries threatened reprisals (this had just happened between Canada and Germany), and we, having no tariffs to lower to our colonies, could not indemnify them against such reprisals. This, he thought, was a situation Cobden and Bright had not foreseen. He expressed his desire that a discussion on the subject should be opened. Within three days it had dawned upon Great Britain that this was not a mere passage in a speech. It looked like Mr Chamberlain's greatest bid for fame. He had made Colonial administration a vital piece of Cabinet work and parliamentary government; he wanted to make it the central pivot. He had made the Colonial Secretaryship a most important office in the Ministry; he wanted to make it *the* most important office. In an Imperial nation the Colonial Secretary should hold threads that ran through every other office; an Imperial Customs Union would be the first step, and a long one, towards that end. Nay, in an Imperial nation, the Colonial Secretary should be Prime Minister. So Mr Chamberlain made his high bid.

He had a great popularity, and a great following. He might in any case have made people actually consider an ideal. No one else could have done it. The agitation for efficiency was already drooping under the bland inattention of England. It was all very well for a restless inquirer like Mr H. G. Wells to talk about the future as lying with the middle class; and for middle-class men

to lift their eyebrows at reports of "ragging" in the Grenadiers,[1] or outbreaks at Sandhurst, and feel themselves at any rate not brought up to that kind of behaviour. But the middle class showed no sign whatever of getting over its proneness to easy distractions. The Stock Exchange, always falling back on sporting interests in times of slack business, organised a walking race to Brighton on May Day. For the rest of the summer, so acutely was the public fancy tickled, all kinds of walking races were arranged, until the summit of hilarity was reached with a race for tea-shop waitresses. A great swimmer decided to attempt swimming the Channel; that turned into a craze also, and the daily doings of half-a-dozen swimmers were chronicled in the newspapers. Girls took to playing hockey, and not a suburb or a small provincial town but must have its hockey club. Music by Richard Strauss appeared in London concert programmes, and the world might stand still while people argued whether he had, or had not, rendered all other music obsolete. The ordinary halfpenny newspaper had ceased to be facile enough; a halfpenny picture paper must be launched, and *The Daily Mirror* made its appearance, shrewdly aimed at opening a new market among women, whom it must have been galling for the newspaper proprietors to see not spending their halfpennies at a bookstall as they caught trains to the City. The elaboration with which interest was enlisted in criminal cases had an unusually busy field this year. First, there was the Moat House Farm case, a peculiarly exciting one, because it opened with a man being charged with forging cheques in the name of a woman, mistress of the farm, who had disappeared, and ended in the discovery of her body, and the alteration of the charge to one of murder. Newspaper enterprise was so active that the search for the body was conducted behind temporary hoardings. Two other

[1] In February 1903.

murder cases, and a piece of wild shooting down a suburban road, in which three Armenians were killed by a compatriot, while the neighbourhood went into something like a panic, provided other excitements on the street placards. As if these cases were not enough, the cheaper newspapers spent a breathless fortnight, in September, hunting for a lady who had mysteriously disappeared, and was ultimately found dead in a coppice in a park near London. The irresponsible fervour of this public hunt had an offensive element. Odd moments spared by the populace from these affairs were given to expressing resentment against one of the strange prophets that occasionally appear from America. This was Dr Dowie, who flourished in a sectarian settlement on the shores of Lake Michigan, with a creed that made him personally little lower than the angels. In the strong belief that charlatanry was turned to Dr Dowie's own material comfort, with a good deal of blasphemous nonsense in the process, crowds broke up meetings held by himself and by his wife and son. Another American doctrine was more quickly obtaining a following. Christian Science had gathered by now a body of English adherents.

It was part of Mr Chamberlain's genius that he could pitch politics in the key of a public excitement ; he could make his ideas " good newspaper stuff." His first speech would, however, not have fallen into that category. The despair of ardent Imperialists is that colonies, simply as colonies, never are good newspaper stuff. But though the direct reference of Mr Chamberlain's speech was to the colonies, it was equally clear that he had in mind a revival of a general customs tariff in England ; and within a week the Free Trade counterblast had begun. The Birmingham speech was elevated into a regular political programme ; party war was declared over it, and it was very quickly apparent that the unifying influence of an educational question upon the Liberal party was nothing to

the unifying influence of a call to the defence of Free Trade. A debate was raised in the House of Commons on 29th May: was Mr Chamberlain to be taken as speaking for himself or for the Government? Mr Balfour merely replied that he and Mr Chamberlain were in complete agreement, but did not intend to produce details at this early stage for the Opposition to tear to pieces. This was all very well; but as Mr Chamberlain had not shrunk from facing the dilemma presented—that he must either tax food-stuffs or else have no tariff advantage to offer to the colonies—and had boldly admitted that taxation of food-stuffs was in his mind, a great many of the Ministerial party began to be apprehensive about presenting such a programme to their constituents. The first comments sent home from the colonies, especially from Australia, were not very friendly. Fiscal independence was too precious to be easily given up, and a Customs Union must mean surrender of purely local power of taxation.

Practically no other subject counted for anything in Parliament during the remainder of the session. To earnest Liberals Mr Chamberlain's proposal was an attempt at pure reaction. At its best, it would be Imperialism as a yoke. But the mere suggestion of a tariff brought out all the Protectionist feeling that was in the country. The scheme, launched for an ideal of co-operation with the colonies, found itself suddenly in alliance with arguments for forcing open foreign markets and keeping our own markets for our own manufacturers. Earnest Liberals fell upon this, in turn, as an attempt to secure more profits for manufacturers and shareholders at the cost of higher prices to the poor, and at the cost of perpetual embroilments with foreign countries. The reply was that, if we had a large population too poor to stand a small tariff, then Free Trade had not achieved much for the working man. So the controversy waxed within a month to the broadest possible basis on either

side. It was sharpened by the immediate party difficulties it raised. A debate on the new lines during the discussion of the Finance Bill had drawn from Mr Ritchie professions of the stiffest adherence to Free Trade. How then were he and Mr Chamberlain going to continue sitting in the same Cabinet? In the House of Lords it appeared that the Duke of Devonshire and Lord Goschen were Free Traders. The opportunity for splitting up the Government was obvious, and was pursued relentlessly. The chief split, that between Mr Balfour and Mr Chamberlain, could not be brought about; they appeared together at a luncheon at the Constitutional Club, deliberately arranged for party purposes; and were still—without details—in agreement. But besides the Cabinet there was the Ministerial party; and by the beginning of July Unionist Free Traders were holding meetings as a separate group in the House. The Opposition naturally made every possible opportunity for raising a question of such obvious profit to themselves; the Government as naturally declined, whenever it could, to allow the question to appear. The only further item of importance elicited during the session was the admission drawn from the Duke of Devonshire by Lord Rosebery that the Cabinet was holding some sort of inquiry. This hint that the Unionist party might, as a party, be committed to a tariff was emphasised by the appearance of a flood of leaflets from the Liberal Unionist headquarters. Mr Chamberlain had been as prompt as ever to set party machinery in motion. At the same time a league designed to act for the new policy alone, the Tariff Reform League, came into being; and on the other side the Cobden Club, which had for years led little more than a formal existence, awoke to activity, and the Free Trade Union was founded to counterbalance the flood of Mr Chamberlain's leaflets and speakers. When the House rose, there was little expectation that this Parliament

would meet again. So profoundly had the political currents been stirred that a dissolution early in 1904 was anticipated. The Government had had some very uncomfortable experiences at by-elections. In the Rye division of Sussex a Unionist majority of 2500 had been turned into a Liberal majority of 500. At Woolwich a turnover of no less than 6000 votes had given the seat to a Labour member, Mr Will Crooks; and another Labour candidate, Mr Arthur Henderson, had won the Barnard Castle division of Yorkshire, though the vote against the Unionists had been split between him and a Liberal candidate. The Government had also lost North Fermanagh to a Nationalist. These losses were for the most part put down to the mismanagement of the war, and to a general irritation with the failure to show energy in reform. No one could yet tell how Mr Chamberlain's policy would affect the country. But his personal popularity was an enormous asset; the impression of vigorous proposals would be another; and the enthusiasm for the colonies during the war, however sentimental, would be a third. When once the new question had become so pressing, it was supposed that the Government would not long carry on without an election.

Besides the Irish Land Bill and the London Education Bill little had been done in Parliament. One or two other matters had, however, made an appearance. The brewing trade had expressed its perturbation at the new movement of licensing justices. Lord Burton put certain questions in the House of Lords, to which the Lord Chancellor had replied that licensing justices must not act on grounds of general policy, but on equity and expediency in the particular case. Mr Balfour, replying to a deputation, had taken the line that licence-holders were right to ask for some security, since, if licences were to be absolutely insecure, no decent man would engage in the trade. It was rather cynically noted that the Rye

election result had been cheered at a meeting of the Beer and Wine Trade Defence League, a sad sign of discontent from those upon whom the Unionists had been accustomed to rely for support. Yet the general approval of the policy of reducing licences was not to be denied; a strong appeal to the Government, signed by prominent people in every rank and walk of life, was based on the feeling that, if the justices' movement was to be checked, as Mr Balfour's remarks implied, it must only be by the establishment of some other system of reduction. The principle of compensation, which an earlier Tory Ministry had endeavoured to incorporate in local government schemes, made its reappearance now in discussion. Temperance principles had been much assisted by the cry for efficiency; they made a new, if mildly grotesque, appearance this year in a gospel of taking no drinks between meals; there were those who complained of the amount of overeating that this called for.

Motor car legislation also appeared during the session. For some years there had been a growing public demand for licensing both cars and drivers. Great rates of speed and frequent accidents had irritated people; and it was urged that cars ought to be numbered, since identification of the car against the will of the owners in case of an accident was impossible without numbering; and that drivers should be required to pass some test of efficiency. A Bill was introduced by the Government to achieve both of these objects. By way of sugaring the pill of the registration fees, the measure handed the money over to the local authorities, for improving the roads. Local authorities were also empowered to make a speed limit in their districts. But on this latter point public opinion forced the Government to amend their Bill, and introduce a universal speed limit of twenty miles an hour. After that the Bill made a quick passage.

Motor cars had by this time been greatly improved. Breakdowns were infrequent; speed and power had immensely increased, and the appearance of cars had changed; they no longer looked like carriages accidentally detached from horses. Motor racing over long courses, with its deadly accidents, still flourished; but manufacturers in England were beginning to pay more attention to long "reliability trials" than to mere speed tests. Cars were still very expensive; and it was believed that "not this generation nor the next will see the disappearance of the horse from London. Can anyone record the smallest diminution in the number of hansom cabs, or any shortening of the long line of horse omnibuses?"[1] But motor omnibuses were already on trial.

The year is notable in the history of science for the discovery of radium. A French scientist, Professor Curie, and his wife had succeeded in extracting from pitchblende, a curious substance found hitherto only in certain mines in Austria, an element with amazing properties. It had activities similar to the X-rays, but the astonishing thing was that its output of energy seemed not to diminish its volume. It had destructive effects upon the human skin and cell-structure; but it was believed that these effects might be turned to useful medical purposes. Professor Curie was lecturing at the Royal Institution in June.

The fiscal controversy overwhelmed almost all the interest that might have been taken in two reports published this year. One was the report of the Joint Committee on Municipal Trading. It was not a very remarkable document, amounting to little more than a proposal for a uniform system of auditing municipal accounts, the auditors to be professional accountants, appointed for five years, and subject to the approval of the Local Government Board. But it was believed that

[1] *The Times*, 13th November 1903.

really drastic and disinterested auditing would be a check on much of the modern municipal activity. Since the joint committee was appointed, there had been more deliberate attempts to make "municipal socialism" a vital question. Some of the attempts were wasted, being directed against extremist proposals, emanating from sources of no authority, for municipal supplies of such things as bread and tobacco. A shrewder attack was that delivered against the system by which the landlord compounded for rates on his property, and the tenant paid an inclusive rent; this, it was argued, blinded the working man—and in London or Glasgow with their blocks of flats blinded many of the middle class also—to the cost at which municipal enterprises were undertaken: the heaviness of rates was not really felt. Then there was the question of the large number of municipal employees, and their natural influence at an election on the side of the enterprises which gave them employment. Birmingham, for instance, had 7000 of such men, and would have 1500 more when the tramways were taken over. The housing work of municipalities was criticised as costly, slow, and aiming at ideals which placed the tenements, when built, beyond the means of the workman. Insanitary areas had better be dealt with by drastic action against the owners. Some feeling was aroused, but on the whole municipal trading was successful in giving the communities, in which it was active, efficient and unstinted services; the mere label of socialism could not prevail against this practical usefulness. It happened that municipal housing had enlisted the interest of King Edward, ever since his work on the Housing Commission. He visited in this year the new blocks of dwellings erected by the London County Council on the Millbank site, and showed himself very expert in such details as cupboards. It may be mentioned here that the council most successfully solved in this year the problem of naming the new

streets of its Strand Improvement Scheme. All sorts of people had rushed into print with suggestions; but the council—thanks, it was believed, to its distinguished clerk, Mr Gomme—bettered all the advice by naming the broad straight road through to Holborn, Kingsway, and the crescent uniting it with the Strand, Aldwych—a name which preserved the ancient associations both of Wych Street and of the Danish settlement commemorated in the name of St Clement Danes Church. A less happy movement of local government, which provided the critics of municipal trading with a most useful text, was the acquisition by the Marylebone Borough Council of the electric light undertaking in their district; the cost, one million and a quarter, was actually in excess of the rateable value of the area.

The other report which failed to obtain due public attention was a much more serious one. It was the Report of the Royal Commission on the War, and it was a document little short of appalling. It told of hundreds of thousands of Lee-Enfield rifles wrongly sighted; of sixty-six million rounds of ammunition of which the bullet stripped in the rifle, to the ultimate danger of the shooter; of cavalry swords thoroughly bad in material. Reserves of supplies at the beginning of the war had been disgracefully low: of cavalry swords there were only eighty in reserve. There were no reserves of proper khaki uniforms, but some 400,000 drill suits too thin for use in South Africa. Two of the army corps had neither transport materials nor transport animals. The Remount Department had no system of obtaining in time of peace information as to available supplies of horses. Such things, and many more, were exposed in detail. In general, the recommendations were that the office of Commander-in-Chief should be abolished, and War Office control reorganised on the lines of the Board of Admiralty. Specific changes in War Office administration had already

been recommended, and proposals for reorganisation drawn up, by a Departmental Committee.

The truth was thus as bad as the worst accusations against the Government had asserted it to be. But Mr Chamberlain was still, as he had been before, the "lightning conductor." [1] The whole political energy of the country was switched on in his direction, and there followed an autumn and a winter of such indefatigable speech-making as had never been known; it beat the most strenuous periods of the war time. The Liberal party showed a wholly united front. Here and there were prominent individual cases of independence. Liberals, for instance, were gravely astonished when Mr Charles Booth, whose work, *Life and Labour in London*, had reformed sociological methods, declared himself a supporter of Mr Chamberlain. But no uncertainty existed as to the co-operation between leaders who had recently been so openly at variance. Lord Rosebery, Mr Asquith and Mr Haldane were as stout defenders of Free Trade as Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and Mr Lloyd George. A moment's hesitation on the other side had attended a statement by Mr Chamberlain, to the effect that he would not even press for inquiry into his proposals if he found the people unwilling to bear a slight burden for an Imperial ideal. But now that business men anxious for a tariff had enlisted under him these exalted attitudes were rapidly modified by clever organisers, and the "slight burden" was soon made to appear no burden by intimations that a system of Colonial preference, putting duties upon corn, mutton, etc., would bring in money enough to allow the duties on tea, sugar and other articles of food to be lightened, so that a balance would be struck.

Liberals, while maintaining the broadest principles of Free Trade—the absence of perpetual opportunities

[1] See *Punch*, 22nd July 1903.

for friction with foreign countries, the freedom from acrimonious bargaining with colonists, the immense subtleties of the industrial structure which we had reared upon free imports—unwearyingly attacked Mr Chamberlain in every detail of statistics and every specific instance he produced. A relentlessly wet summer and autumn, accompanied by depressing floods, disposed people to welcome a new thing to think about. By its disastrous destruction of crops, the weather also assisted the Protectionist element in Mr Chamberlain's forces. The trade depression and the lack of employment produced a vague inclination to try a new way with industry. As the arguments for Retaliation in hostile tariffs and Protection for our own industries slowly made headway in the propaganda against Mr Chamberlain's original idealistic proposal, his standing as a business man, whose reputation had been made before the world knew him, in an enterprising city, was remembered more than his capture of the public imagination as Colonial Secretary.

But before the remarkable autumn campaign began, there were extremely exciting passages in the inner circles of politics. The Cabinet was summoned in September, and everyone was on the alert. Did it mean dissolution? And, if not, what rearrangement was going to take place? Would Mr Chamberlain resign, and so leave the Free Traders to pull the party together, or would the Free Trade Ministers resign, and so leave the party committed to Mr Chamberlain? For, according as these events fell out, Mr Balfour's position, it was thought, would be determined. He had all along asserted the absence of any disagreement between himself and Mr Chamberlain; but the conviction was strong that, if the Free Traders in the Cabinet won, Mr Balfour would, to say the least, welcome a situation in which he need not commit himself further, and would hold the party aloof. One influence, powerful still, though in retirement, had just

been removed. Lord Salisbury died on 23rd August. In view of the recent turns of political events, both the war and the fiscal campaign, it was natural to sum up his contribution to English life by saying that, while he could not create ideals by force of imagination, or set popular feelings in motion, he could lay a hand on public opinion, and could, in the widest sense, govern.[1] An aristocrat, a true Conservative, he never quite adjusted himself to a world in which newspapers spread over all the country speeches meant only for a particular assembly; he was given to saying things which looked cynical and provocative in print. Hence arose the view that in much of his social legislation he was impelled forward by Mr Chamberlain. The truth was rather that he was never reluctant to meet the given case, nor blind to the political impulses of his day. But he disliked the wrapping of a given case in large phrases and democratic generalisations; he disliked the pretence of doing from emotion what was done from a purely intellectual acquiescence in a certain presentation of facts. The appearance of cynicism was usually due to this obstinate clearing of his own conscience.[2]

Now that he was dead, there was no one in the party of more administrative or parliamentary weight and experience than Mr Chamberlain. He fought against no odds. This added sharpness to the country's expectation of a decisive struggle in the Cabinet. But when the announcement came, on 18th September, it left the public bewildered. Mr Ritchie, the Free Trade Chancellor of the Exchequer, had resigned, and Lord George Hamilton, who had also been a strong Free Trader—but Mr Chamberlain had resigned as well. Then two more Free Traders resigned, Lord Balfour of Burleigh and Mr Arthur Elliot. It was a tariff "purge," but why had Mr Chamberlain

[1] *The Times*, 24th August 1903.
[2] *Cf.* vol. i₂, p. 315.

gone? The reason given was that he wished in any case to have a perfectly free hand to urge his proposals, to take any steps he liked for laying them before the country, to be unhampered by obligations to colleagues. Then men turned their eyes back to the Cabinet, and saw that the Duke of Devonshire remained in it. Hence arose an embittered discussion of whether the Free Trade members of the Cabinet had known of Mr Chamberlain's intention to resign before they intimated their own resignations—whether, in fact, they had been jockeyed out of the Cabinet. When, on 6th October, the Duke of Devonshire's resignation was announced, it was accompanied, most unusually, by the publication of the letters on his decision exchanged between himself and Mr Balfour. They were not comfortable reading, and Mr Balfour's showed querulousness. They seemed to make it clear that Mr Balfour had not regretted the loss of the other Free Traders, though his silence as to Mr Chamberlain's purpose had been dictated solely by the ordinary rules governing correspondence between gentlemen; but he had distinctly hoped to keep the Duke. The Cabinet was committed to no more than inquiry, and the Duke might, he thought, have remained within it at least until he knew the result of inquiry.[1] Mr Balfour's tone suggested that he felt the weakness of the material to his hand for a reconstruction of the Ministry, and indeed, if the Cabinets of 1900 and 1902 had made a poor show to a nation demanding business energy in government, this reconstructed Cabinet of 1903 made a still poorer one. Mr Austen Chamberlain went to the

[1] It may be remarked that Mr Balfour should have known better. The Duke was the most clear-headed man of his day. Mr Gladstone had tried exactly the same method of securing him for the Cabinet of 1886. The Duke had replied that inquiry raised such hopes that a Cabinet which undertook it was in fact committed to more than inquiry. See Holland's *Life of the Duke of Devonshire*, vol. ii.

Exchequer, an appointment which, if it hinted at more than mere "absence of disagreement" between Mr Balfour and Mr Chamberlain on a question wholly concerned with the Exchequer, was otherwise insignificant. Mr Alfred Lyttelton went to the Colonial Office. Mr Brodrick took the opportunity of a "general post" to leave the War Office, deserting his army corps, and removed himself to the India Office, to succeed Lord George Hamilton. Mr Arnold Forster, a young man of vigorous ideas, but regarded as a light-weight for the job, undertook the War Office. Popular opinion summed up the whole transaction as the making of a warming-pan ministry, to await Mr Chamberlain's triumphant conversion of the country. Everything now, even the premiership, was cleared for his high bid.

There could be little doubt of this. At the very moment when Mr Chamberlain accepted the Tariff Reform League's full position, that the object of the campaign was "to consolidate and develop the resources of the empire and to defend the industries of the United Kingdom"—a frank Protectionist position—Mr Balfour was saying that public opinion did not seem ripe for a change in our basis of taxation if preference involved, as it almost certainly did, taxes, however light, upon food-stuffs. If Mr Chamberlain won, therefore, he won for his own hand. He went resolutely to the campaign. At his first great meeting of the autumn, in Glasgow, he produced what the Free Traders had all along challenged him to produce—a preliminary sketch of a tariff. He proposed a two-shilling duty on corn, and the same on flour; a 5-per-cent. duty on foreign meat and consumable produce, except bacon; the reduction of the tea-duty by three-quarters and the sugar-duty by a half, and corresponding reductions on coffee and cocoa. He still cherished his Colonial ideal himself, warning his audience that the colonies would not wait for ever, and the chance of a fiscally consolidated empire might pass. Before

the end of the year he had made speeches also at Greenock, Newcastle, Tynemouth, Liverpool, Birmingham, Cardiff and Newport. As the plan of his campaign developed it was seen that he was taking in each case the local industry as an example of the need for Protection—sugar-refining at Greenock, iron and steel at Newcastle and Tynemouth, metal manufacture at Birmingham, tin plates at Newport. Liberals joined battle with him unceasingly. They produced statistics to prove that Mr Chamberlain selected certain years, in order to make out that trade was declining. They defied him to unify his doctrine—to explain the remedies he produced for the sugar-refiner to the soda-water and jam manufacturers, who depended on cheap sugar; or his remedies for the iron and steel trades to the ship-builders who worked on cheap imported plates. They defied him to reconcile the statement that a tariff would keep out foreign goods with the statement that foreigners would pay such duties that other taxes could be taken off. They defied him to show how, if trade was to be protected, prices would fail to rise all round. Mr Chamberlain, his eye firmly fixed on his ideal, boldly declared that his figures were employed merely as illustrations; and harped perpetually on the facts that there was unemployment, that we admitted foreign goods which gave our own workmen no employment, and were shut by tariff walls out of markets abroad.

Liberals kept as firmly to other broad assertions—the "big-loaf" of Free Trade, the "starvation line" among the poor. An extraordinary revival of political economy began to occur. Fourteen professors of the subject (no one had ever thought there were so many in the country) signed a manifesto against Mr Chamberlain; a smaller, but equally eminent, number produced a counterblast. Statistics on either side were so riddled that wholly new theories of statistics emerged. Whatever the end of the immediate affair might be, there was the consoling

thought that business must be the better for the destruction of weaknesses in economic theory; and politics must be the better for it too, since all big political questions nowadays were in the last resort economic questions.[1]

One or two foreign affairs had received rather more than just the dregs of interest left over from the main political struggle. The King, on his way abroad in the autumn, had broken his journey at Paris, and the fact that Paris was fond of him was beginning to obliterate antagonistic feelings, and pave the way for friendship. The assassination of the King and Queen of Servia in the summer was reported in such terrible detail that public opinion went so far as to demand the recall of our minister from the blood-stained scene. It was decided, however, that so pronounced a step had better not be taken; and the minister remained, but only to watch events, and not to maintain diplomatic relations.

The great alarm about poisoned beer had largely died down before the appearance in December of the report of the Royal Commission on Arsenical Poisoning. The commission was inclined to suspect the presence of arsenic in a good many foods and drinks; but its recommendations were practically confined to stricter inspection. Beer itself was already made under more careful supervision by brewing firms, and had quite recovered its reputation.

In December were issued also new Home Office rules governing the use of lead in the manufacture of china and earthenware. Since the evils of lead-poisoning had first become matter of common knowledge,[2] the attempts to minimise them had been frequent. The special rules of 1894 had been supplemented by new rules in 1898, enjoining monthly medical examination of women and young persons, the use of overalls and head-coverings, etc. Meanwhile the enforcement of notification of cases of

[1] *The Times*, 4th June 1903.

[2] See vol i., p. 339.

lead-poisoning, under the Factory Act of 1895, had provided statistics showing that the number of cases annually had been still well over 300, up to 1898. There now arose a movement against the use of lead at all, since even constantly improved rules appeared to leave so large a margin of danger. Inventors had set themselves to produce a satisfactory leadless glaze; and the agitation was so successful that in 1900 draft rules had been issued by the Home Office, proposing to limit the presence of lead in glazes to 2 per cent. of soluble lead. The manufacturers objected to this; it would interfere less with expensive wares than with the cheap wares, in which foreign manufacturers, not subject to so drastic a rule, might disastrously drive them from the market. Some of the best of them argued also that in well-equipped factories, properly ventilated and supervised, lead could be used safely; the majority of the cases of poisoning came, they said, from the small factories which could not by any ingenuity be healthily ventilated or adequately inspected. Lord James of Hereford was appointed to arbitrate on the draft rules, and in 1903 he issued his award, on which the new rules were founded. They abandoned the attempt to limit the percentage of lead. But they added stringency to the rules of 1898, particularly in respect of exhaust ventilation; they provided for monthly medical examination of all workers, including adult males; and they established a scheme of compensation for workers certified to be suffering from lead-poisoning.

A literary event of the autumn fully able to hold its own even in the turmoil was the publication of Morley's *Life of Gladstone*. Literature and art sustained a curiously large number of losses during the year: Henley, Lecky, Shorthouse, Seton Merriman, George Gissing and Whistler all died in 1903. Two men, both concerned with the bettering of life in towns, in very different ways, had passed

away—Lord Rowton, whose quiet fame as Disraeli's private secretary had been overshadowed by his later fame as builder of model lodging-houses, and Mr Quintin Hogg, who founded at the Polytechnic Institute a system of technical education in days before London had stirred itself to the need for such education. Herbert Spencer died in December. His erudite *Synthetic Philosophy* had been completed some years earlier. It appeared likely that he would survive rather as a great organiser of philosophical investigation than as a great philosopher. His actual structure already showed signs of disintegration; it had its foundations in the Darwin period of scientific hypothesis, and some of his premisses had by now been modified, or even superseded. The tendency in philosophy at this time was towards a different use of science. Speculations in moral philosophy were based less on the deductive method of the origin of species, and more on what might be called pathological psychology. In one respect the mark of its period so distinct in the *Synthetic Philosophy* kept it in the peculiarly English type; its end was ethical. But it failed of its full effect largely because of its essential scheme. Philosophers now tended to distrust schemes, to dislike the logical whole, to make for compromise, to accept the irrational elements in human composition and translate them, rather than endeavour to expel them. It was, for instance, highly characteristic of the philosophy of these years that Professor William James, almost its acknowledged leader, should have investigated the psychology of religious experience. Scepticism of a militant kind was disappearing, and the moral philosopher reached out for every support of the moral instincts in man. A new pragmatism was the guiding star of the universities, and the eschatology of Herbert Spencer's best days made but little appeal.

CHAPTER X

1904 : THE TURN OF THE TIDE

THE face of political life was now completely changed. Liberals were united, energetic, impelled by a cause. The doubt and hesitation had shifted to the Unionist party. Some of its members were in open rupture ; the Duke of Devonshire had gone so far in December as to advise Free Trade Unionists among the electorate not to vote for a Unionist, if he were a Tariff Reformer. Many others, less decided in their attitude, asked with growing impatience what leadership they were under. They found a suspended judgment, which was Mr Balfour's official state of mind, impossible to present to their constituents as a policy. Were they to follow Mr Chamberlain ? But in that case their duty in the division lobbies would often be most obscure. Some even came to asking themselves, if they did not ask publicly, whether Mr Chamberlain's genius was of the egoistic kind that must inevitably cut sooner or later across his party. He had borne a prominent share in the shattering division of one side ; he had now divided the other. There was an echo of many thoughts in *Punch's* quotation of the text : "Had Zimri peace, who slew his master ? " [1]

A little less idealistic, but not a whit less resolute, Mr Chamberlain continued to urge on the fray. Early in the new year was published a list of persons who had consented to act as a commission to investigate depressed industries, and to draw up a suggested tariff. It contained several well-known names—Sir Alfred Jones, the ship-

[1] *Punch*, 17th June 1903.

owner; Sir Alexander Henderson, a railway chairman; Sir Vincent Caillard, banker and financier; Sir W. T. Lewis, the coalowner; Mr Charles Parsons, inventor of the turbine engine; Sir Robert Herbert, formerly Under-Secretary for the Colonies; Mr W. H. Grenfell, athlete and squire. The rest were mostly business men of some eminence in their business, but not known to the world. On 19th January Mr Chamberlain spoke in the City of London on the theme that our supremacy in banking, which the Free Traders attributed to our being the great open market of the world, and therefore the centre of bills of exchange and all the apparatus of commercial credit, must fall away, if our industrial supremacy fell.

If he had miscalculated the task he had undertaken, these opening days of the new year must have given him his lesson. At a by-election in the Ashburton division of Devonshire the Liberal majority was doubled; at Norwich, in spite of a split vote, the Liberal candidate won the seat from the Conservatives by a majority of 1800. Nor could there be much doubt as to the cause of these events; nothing but the tariff question counted in politics for the moment. Another question was ripening which, within a few months, was also to be a weapon in the hands of Liberal candidates. The Transvaal made its choice in the labour question. Its mind was changed. In November 1903 intimations had reached England that "South Africa had gradually reconciled itself to the Chinaman"; but American experience showed that he could not come in as a simple immigrant; he must be under rigid contract.[1] In December the Legislative Council of the Transvaal had adopted Sir George's Farrar's motion for the importation under indenture of unskilled Asiatic labourers. In January 1904 the Draft Ordinance was out. The imported labour was to be confined to the Rand; the labourers were to carry passports, renewed annually; were not to be allowed

[1] *The Times*, 13th November 1903.

to settle permanently in the country, or to mix with the rest of the population ; and were not to move outside the ground allotted to them except by permit lasting only for forty-eight hours. The means by which public opinion in South Africa, which only a year before was holding mass meetings of protest against the Chinaman, had been converted were not difficult to perceive. Prosperity in the last resort depended on the Rand. Agriculture could only get under way very slowly after the dislocation of the war ; and even when restored to activity could absorb but a limited amount of labour, and produce but a limited revenue. The mines, now that their machinery was renewed, could open almost at a word the stream of wealth. It rested with the mine-owners to dictate the word ; and they dictated "Chinamen." Once they had carried their point in South Africa, they had a short way with the home Government. Mr Chamberlain had said that he neither could nor would interfere with local opinion ; and Mr Lyttleton held himself bound by this promise. The mine-owners used it as a virtual settlement of the question ; and before the home Government had had the Draft Ordinance a month in its hands they were demanding of Lord Milner that he should press for its instant ratification. There were certainly dangers ahead. Mr Seddon, Premier of New Zealand, had proposed to the other colonies a formal united protest against this flouting of their experience and their determined policy towards Chinese labour. If the protest took shape, it would be an odd commentary on Mr Chamberlain's imperialistic ideals to have the home Government vacillating between the opinion of one colony and the opinion of all the others. Moreover the Liberals were arousing feeling at home. Had we endured the war, with all its cost in British lives and British money, to see the Rand mines full of labour that was not British in the remotest sense of the word, and a peculiarly depraved form of labour ? Meetings of protest were taking place all

over England. Even the House of Lords had witnessed the expression of some uneasiness about the moral aspects of the strict indenturing. But by taking their stand on Mr Chamberlain's words the mine-owners put themselves ahead of dangers; and on 12th March it was announced that the Ordinance had been allowed. Another by-election was going on at the moment in East Dorset. This question was made by the Liberal candidate as prominent as Free Trade, and another Unionist seat was lost. Men began to look at the Opposition, and speculate on the quality of material in it for forming a ministry.

In January the long trial of Mr Whittaker Wright reached its end; but the end was more terrible than the law could make it. The preliminary hearings had occupied many sittings before a King's Bench judge during the autumn. No ordinary person, as has been said, could pretend to follow the intricacies of the methods by which Mr Whittaker Wright had arranged the balance sheets of his various companies for the annual meeting of each; but transfer of shares among them was the root of the methods. The trial ended on 26th January, in a sentence of seven years' penal servitude. But the evening papers announcing this were still on the printing press when the information came that, while waiting in a room at the Law Courts, after the sentence, for removal to prison, Mr Wright had apparently had a seizure of some kind, and was dead. The inquest proved that he had killed himself. It was a story of extraordinary calmness and determination. A loaded and cocked revolver was discovered on the body; but the death was due to poison. He had been able to find an occasion for giving himself cyanide of potassium, and had then gone on talking for a few minutes, perfectly quietly, to his solicitor and a friend. He had been smoking a cigar, and as he asked for another he fell from his chair, and was dead before a doctor could be brought to him. He had had ten years of wealth and of power in the City; and he had

been even more dazzling in his period of success than other company promoters. He had set about building a colossal house on a Surrey hill, and his billiard-room, with a glass ceiling under a lake, so that the roof seemed to be of water, became a standing example of fantastic extravagance and the craziness of sudden riches. A footnote to the trial is that Mr Rufus Isaacs finally established his reputation at the Bar; he moved through the intricate mass of figures with unfaltering skill. It was asserted that, if the Judge put to him a question about some item in a balance sheet which had been mentioned weeks before, Mr Rufus Isaacs could answer at once, without reference to his papers.

Before the House met, a new line of army reform had been entered upon. A small committee, consisting of Lord Esher, Admiral Sir John Fisher and General Sir George Sydenham Clarke, had drawn up a scheme for reconstituting the War Office on the model of the Board of Admiralty, according to the Royal Commission's recommendation.[1] The Commander-in-Chief was to be abolished, and an Army Council of four military members, with the parliamentary heads of the department, was to take his place. Commands were to be decentralised, and unity was to be given by the creation of an Inspector-General. A Board of Selection was to control promotions. Finally, the Committee of Defence, which Mr Balfour had constructed in 1903 on a basis of permanence to replace the Committee of the Cabinet, which had been the first experiment in this direction, was given a staff of a secretary and some ten officers of either service. The new Army Council was composed of Mr Arnold Forster, Secretary of State, Lord Donoughmore, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, and Mr Bromley Davenport, Financial Secretary; General Lyttelton, General Douglas, General Plumer and General Wolfe Murray. Sir Edward Ward was appointed Secretary to the Council, and to the Committee of Defence. The

[1] See p. 196.

Duke of Connaught became Inspector-General and President of the Board of Selection. The new broom had in four months swept Mr Brodrick and his army corps clean out of the office. It was on the whole a good start. The council represented both the older generation among army commanders and the new generation, which had come home in such a bewildering batch of very young generals from South Africa. Sir Edward Ward, the one man who had acquired a thoroughly business reputation in the war, was hailed as eminently in his right place. The Duke of Connaught was known as a plain, keen soldier; and his presidency of the Board of Selection promised an end to private influences in promotion. The looser organisation of local commands, in place of the tight machinery of army corps, would provide a better means of employing the young generals. With no little relief, the country decided that it had at last a reform worth leaving to itself for trial, and removed the subject from everlasting discussion. The old Duke of Cambridge just lived to hear of the new ideas. He died on 17th March. He had never been a friend to the remodelling of our military notions, and had stood actively in the way of some earlier attempts. But that could be passed over now; and there was much on the positive side to remember. He had been devoted to the army; and, after all, no scientific methods and no reorganisation would be of much use if his example in that respect were forgotten.

There was so much on the parliamentary *tapis* that the army could well be allowed a little peace. The debate on the Address gave an early opportunity for harrying the Government on the fiscal question; and in division on an amendment moved by Mr Morley the Ministerial majority dropped to fifty-one—half its normal size. Mr Lloyd George showed in this debate that his reputation was not going to rest solely on his attacks upon Mr Chamberlain during the war, or his skill in the Educa-

tion Bill debates. He could be slashing enough on the Free Trade side at public meetings (he had just denounced the Tariff Reform campaign as "the inauguration of an era of universal loot"), but he could also make a Unionist minister refer to his speech on this amendment as the only speech really dealing with the question.[1] Mr Chamberlain was at the moment abroad. He had had an exhausting winter, and had just lost, by the death of Mr Powell Williams, a friend of many years. The Opposition were in high feather, Lord Rosebery making gay speeches to the Liberal League, and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and the Radical stalwarts sharing the enjoyment. The by-elections greatly inspirited them. Besides those already mentioned, there had been one in Scotland, for the Ayr Burghs; and although Mr George Younger, the Unionist candidate, entirely repudiated Tariff Reform, the Liberals captured the seat. The signs of a turn of the tide could not be mistaken.

The session promised increased ground for fighting. The Government had decided to introduce a Licensing Bill, and Mr Balfour advised magistrates to await amendment of the law before proceeding with reduction of licences. The Bill introduced a system of compensation for licences refused on other grounds than those of misconduct. A fund was to be raised in each quarter sessions area, by a graduated levy on licences. The quarter sessions area was selected, rather than the brewster sessions area, in order to make the fund large enough to meet considerable cases. From this fund compensation was to be paid calculated on the basis of the death duties that would have been chargeable on the property as licensed premises, deducting the value of them if unlicensed. The principle of the Bill was that, whatever may have been the original theory of licensing, the practice of the justices had led to the establishment of a reasonable expectation

[1] *The Times*, 16th February 1904.

of renewal, except in cases of misconduct. Licences had thereby acquired a recognised value; they paid death duties, and, while the State assessed a value for this purpose, it could not deny it by reverting to a purely annual basis for licences. But once the question had been raised, new licences might be prevented from acquiring that value (the phrase "monopoly value" was coined at this time), by imposing such duties that the value reverted instantly to the public purse. Compensation would not therefore be recoverable for new licences. Liberals opened a broadside attack. The Bill destroyed the unfettered discretion of the justices under the Sharp *v.* Wakefield decision, substituting a system of reduction limited by the amount of the compensation fund. It placed the fund on such a wide area that the justices' dealings with their own district were controlled by conditions in other districts. It abolished the power to affix conditions to the renewal of licences—a kind of reform in which the Liverpool justices had been notably active, securing the abolition of back-door entrances to public-houses, and of the serving of drink to children. But the main attack went to the root of the Bill. Compensation on these terms was not only a recognition of the growth of a vested interest, but the permanent establishment in law of such an interest. Liberals and the mass of temperance reformers did not attempt to deny that the general practice of renewal had led to the growth of an interest; but they maintained that justice could be met by giving notice that, at the end of a certain period, the annual nature of the licence would be reasserted; during that period the trade should readjust itself by mutual insurance to meet the new conditions, and, if a licence was taken away before that time had elapsed, a sum of money should be paid, as it were, in lieu of warning. Compensation in the Government's Bill had not this meaning. As Sir Robert Reid put it in one of the debates

on the Bill: "Compensation had been offered as a compromise, and accepted as a principle." The Liberal attack on the Bill therefore concentrated itself on proposals to limit the payment of compensation to a certain period; seven, fourteen or twenty-one years were offered in different amendments. When lost in the House of Commons, these amendments reappeared in the House of Lords, where they had strong support from the Bench of Bishops; but they met with no better fate.

The truth was that the interest in licences was not merely the interest of "the trade" in its narrower sense. The great brewery flotations of the eighties [1] had spread the interest over the whole community. Licensed premises had become, by the policy of buying houses, the largest asset in the balance sheets of brewing firms. Prices for them had risen enormously in the competition, and the defeat of Local Veto in 1895 had sent them still higher. Anything that put these values in doubt would have shaken the stability of every brewing company in the kingdom. The Liberal position was that deflation of the over-capitalised could not be allowed to weigh as an argument; and that the sound firms could, within a time limit, achieve the necessary readjustments. The strength of the Government's case lay really in a general feeling that the justices' movement for the reduction of licences, successful though it had been in various districts, was bound before long to meet with checks. It rested on legal decisions which, technically indeed quite sound, did not wholly satisfy popular ideas of fairness. When refusal of renewals had passed beyond operations in such places as Farnham, with its obvious disproportion of licences to population,[2] and came to deal with districts in which the ideas of temperance reformers would less easily coincide with ordinary views of what might be

[1] See vol. i., p. 230.
[2] See p. 175.

permitted, reduction of licences would either be stopped, or only carried out at the cost of irritation and an appearance of grandmotherliness. The licensing situation after the decision in Sharp *v.* Wakefield may not unreasonably be compared with the case of higher education after the Cockerton judgment.[1] In both cases the law, when set in motion, trapped customary practice; and the average man did not approve of such uses of the law. His inclination in both cases was to stand by custom, and correct the letter of the law. The justices' movement, if left to proceed by itself, would inevitably have become in time as impossible to pursue as a policy of continual Cockerton audits would have been. If the Government had accepted even the longest time limit for payment of compensation the Licensing Bill would have had little real opposition from any quarter except the Prohibitionist core of the temperance party. As it was, the closure had to be drastically applied before the Bill passed into law.

For the rest, the session was tame. The Budget was not one to restore the failing hold of the Government. Trade was much better, and the Stock Exchange, in spite of the welter of war stock, and a steady fall in Consols in place of the expected rise after the war, was hopeful. But the revenue was no less than two and three-quarters millions below the estimate, a melancholy state of things for a young and untried Chancellor of the Exchequer. There was no novelty in the Budget proposals. Mr Austen Chamberlain just re-imposed one of the pence on the income-tax of which the taxpayer had rejoiced to be rid in the previous year, and put twopence on the tea-tax.

A Penal Servitude Bill was introduced, in which there were traces of the influence of Sir Robert Anderson's theories.[2] It recognised the argument for long periods of detention in the case of habitual criminals, and

[1] See p. 121.
[2] See p. 142.

recognised also that judges reasonably shrank from long sentences of absolute penal servitude on other than the most serious charges. The Bill proposed, therefore, to empower judges to order that part of a long sentence should be served in a place of detention for habitual offenders, where penal servitude was not exacted. This was a compromise quite ineffective from Sir Robert Anderson's point of view; to him the detention of an habitual offender was useless unless it was for life. The Bill in the end was dropped. It could not have been very fortunately pressed forward at a time when the police administration was gravely called in question by the case of Adolf Beck. This man had been arrested in 1895 on suspicion of having defrauded various women; and having been "identified" by the usual processes as a man named Smith, previously convicted for similar offences, was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude. He protested his innocence, and while in prison was able by certain physical facts to prove that he was not Smith; but it was nevertheless believed that the women who charged him with fraud had at any rate recognised him as the defrauder in the present cases. He was therefore made to serve out his sentence. In April 1904 he was again arrested on similar charges, and convicted, again protesting his innocence. The judge, remembering that identification in the earlier case had been shown to have overreached its object, postponed sentence. Before the case was brought up again, a man came under arrest who was proved to be the original Smith; and the "identification" of Beck in both the trials he had undergone was revealed as completely fallacious. The Home Office offered Beck a sum of £2000 as compensation, and a formal free pardon. He refused the offer, and demanded a full investigation. A committee was appointed which entirely established his innocence. It did not recommend, as many hoped that it would, the establishment

of a Court of Criminal Appeal; but naturally the whole affair revived the movement in favour of such a court. Until it was established, public opinion was bound to be shy of supporting the idea of prolonged detention for habitual offenders when it had been shown that a man who had committed no offence at all might be in imminent danger of being classed as a habitual offender. The finger-print system of identification had only been introduced into British police administration since 1900; and most of that branch of the police work depended as yet on more rough and ready methods.

Two other items of the session's work may be mentioned, since they were the beginnings of new movements. One was the statement made in April by the Colonial Secretary as to experiments under official auspices with a view to growing cotton in West Africa. For some time there had been discontent among the Lancashire spinners at their dependence upon the American market, and the subjection of their requirements to purely speculative operations. This year operations of that kind had been peculiarly marked, Mr Sully having attempted a huge gamble. He failed, but the affair gave a great impulse to the movement for British cotton-growing; and experiments were now made in Southern Nigeria, Lagos and Sierra Leone. The other matter was the Aliens Bill. Springing from various causes—from the investigations into sweated labour, from the processions of the unemployed, from fear of anarchistic socialism, and now from the movement for protecting industries—an outcry had arisen against unchecked immigration. No other country in the world permitted it; and the question was asked why we alone should admit foreigners without any stipulation as to their past record or their present ability to maintain themselves decently. Appalling pictures were given of quarters of the East End from which native-born inhabitants had entirely withdrawn before an invasion

of foreigners with a low standard of living, who swarmed in the poor houses, produced unhealthy conditions, and undercut the wages market. For the present, the controversy remained rather vague.

The Tariff Reform campaign seemed to have produced something of the effect aimed at by the apostles of efficiency. The subject was serious, yet the nation took to it ardently, and did not tire of it. True, it is necessary to record in this year one of the most childlike crazes of our period. Some weekly papers, ever inventing new attractions for readers, hit upon the boyishness of grown-up people by announcing that metal discs had been concealed in certain spots, the neighbourhood being more or less obscurely indicated, which would entitle the finders to a sum of money. This " treasure-hunting " developed into an astonishing nuisance. In vain the papers concerned kept on stating that the discs were not on private property, and were not buried. Men with a regular *Treasure Island* fever upon them invaded the front gardens of inoffensive citizens, and grubbed up the flower beds ; dodged the park-keepers in order to tear up the turf of public parks ; quarrelled violently with other treasure hunters who had worked out the given indications in the same way and pitched upon the same point. The moment a man began to probe a spot a crowd instantly collected, on the chance that he might have guessed the spot rightly, but might not be the first to discover the disc. After all, except for the injured owners of suburban gardens, it was an engaging manifestation of ingenuousness in the sophisticated Londoner. Unfortunately London lost this year the man who was beginning to reveal the suburbs, Dan Leno. He had invented a new music hall convention ; he relieved his audiences of the everlasting bar loafer, and gave them instead the man behind the counter of a suburban shop, the landlady of the suburbs, the museum attendant—

a host of lower middle-class figures rendered in all their bland unconsciousness. He made genuine low comedy.

In the summer Colonel Younghusband's advance into Thibet caught the popular imagination. The Indian Government had decided to obtain a definite footing in Thibet, and an expedition was sent of no threatening size. The Dalai Lama, the ruling authority in Lhassa, refused a passage to the mission; but patient methods were pursued, and, though there was some opposition on the road, there was no very serious fighting. The Dalai Lama fled, and the Tashi Lama, who was known to be more friendly, was left in authority. The British expedition reached Lhassa on 3rd August, and another of the great secrets of the world was unveiled. The Imperial City of Pekin had four years earlier been entered by Europeans; and now the greater mystery was opened. The expedition had to wait some time for a satisfactory end to its work. Thibet professed itself under the suzerainty of China, and awaited China's sanction to a treaty of commerce permitting the establishment of British trading posts. The treaty was signed about a month later.

Russia, the still-dreaded influence on the northern frontiers of India, was too busily engaged elsewhere to take any hand in this matter. At the end of 1903 her relations with Japan had been growing very strained. Japan, regarding Russia's advance in Manchuria, had reason to suspect the establishment of Russian influence over Korea. This would have been too threatening an approach. She demanded from Russia reassurances as to Korea, the acknowledgement of the territorial integrity of Korea and the Chinese Empire, and equal rights of trade. Failing to get them, she declared war. The comparative size of the countries made it appear the struggle of a man against a giant; but the Japanese had for years been perfecting their warlike resources on

a European basis, and were believed to be a model of efficiency. They soon began to prove it. In February they sank several Russian battleships of the Port Arthur squadron. In April their forces carried the Ya-lu River against a vast Russian army; and were making dispositions for attacking Port Arthur itself. In their turn they lost some warships by the action of floating mines. British sympathy was throughout with the Japanese. An extraordinary incident of the autumn produced the further element of active resentment against Russia. The Russian fleet in the Far East had been reduced to uselessness; the ships that had not been sunk were blockaded in the harbour of Port Arthur. The Russian fleet in the Baltic was therefore ordered to the East, and left Kronstadt, under the command of Admiral Rozhdestvensky, at the end of August. It lingered about the Baltic for some time, and was not really on its way until October. Suddenly, on 23rd October, England was astounded to hear that the Hull fishing fleet had put into that port, with a tale of having been heavily fired upon by the Russian ships. A night or two earlier, while they were at their fishing in the North Sea, they had perceived the approach of a fleet. All at once searchlights were turned upon them, the warships opened fire, one trawler had been sunk, two others riddled with shot, and—most serious of all—two men had been killed, and sixteen wounded. The dead bodies, both of them headless, were brought back to England.

A storm of fury swept over the nation. The affair looked like a gratuitous piece of dastardly bullying. Men from the fleet were brought up to London on the day following their return, a Sunday, and crowds thronged about them. They were taken to the Foreign Office on the Monday, to give their evidence. The King, telegraphing his sympathy with the widows and the injured men, used the phrase, exceedingly strong for one in his position,

"unwarrantable action." Public opinion demanded that a British fleet should instantly be despatched after the Russian ships, which had by this time gone down the Bay of Biscay, and should arrest them, by force, if necessary, in the Mediterranean. Nor is there any doubt that some such course would have been pursued, had not the Russian Government made immediately the amends dictated to it. It apologised in set terms, detained at Vigo that part of the fleet which had been responsible for the firing, paid liberal compensation, and agreed to an inquiry by an International Commission under The Hague Convention. It appeared that the Russians' defence of their action was that they had reason to suspect that Japan had sent torpedo boats to waylay their fleet, and they believed they saw torpedo boats lurking among the trawlers. This dispelled the appearance of mere wantonness in the firing; but left a rather scornful opinion of the Intelligence Department that was directing the Russian fleet. By the end of the year the Japanese were closing on Port Arthur, having captured one of the most important hills among its outworks; and firing from that hill over the town they sank the Port Arthur squadron at its moorings.

In the quick settlement of the North Sea incident England certainly owed something to the support she had from Russia's ally, France. So rapidly had events moved since the Boer War, when we were on acrid terms with the whole Continent, that in 1904 France and Great Britain were in a position only just short of formal alliance. In the popular estimation, this was largely due to King Edward. He liked the French, and they liked him. He had a wonderful gift of being able to keep on terms not only with the aristocracy in Paris, but with the Republic as well. It was believed that his genial presence, and his conversations with the President of the Republic, had paved the way quickly, so that in April of this year a formal agreement was signed. It was on lines of definite recognition of

policy. We agreed to recognise French interests in Morocco, and they to recognise ours in Egypt; we undertook not to alter the political status of Egypt, and they undertook to cease to ask for a fixed time for our withdrawal, and to leave us freer in dealing with Egyptian revenue surpluses.[1] There were other items of mutual recognition, but these were the chief. The completion of the great irrigation dam at Assouan, which had been formally inaugurated by the Khedive in December 1902, promised new wealth to Egypt; and English people felt that they had earned the acknowledgment of their rights in the guidance of that country. With Germany, meanwhile, our relations remained very guarded. King Edward visited the German Emperor at Kiel in June, and the German fleet visited Plymouth a week or two later; but it was not likely that on the morrow of the agreement with France there would be much cordiality in these meetings. The French Foreign Minister, M. Delcassé, gave signs of rather assertive views of French expansion. Besides, definite naval rivalry on our part with Germany was growing more marked; "No phantom as to German aggression haunts us, but it is our duty to watch the progress of German naval power."[2] The British Admiralty was in energetic hands. Sir John Fisher became First Sea Lord, and the fleets were being reorganised on a basis of commissioned squadrons with reserve ships manned by nucleus crews; four powerful cruiser squadrons were formed to be attached to the fleets; and homogeneity of ships in each battle or cruiser squadron was the object in view. The year gave a grim intimation that submarines had brought into the navy a service which would never have the safety of peace time: Submarine A1 was sunk with all hands off the Nab lightship in March.

The army manœuvres of the year must be mentioned, because they showed the new spirit of reform in the un-

[1] See vol. i., p. 398.

[2] *The Times*, 1st July 1904.

usually practical shape they took. Troops were conveyed in transports to the Essex coast, and the manœuvres were designed on the scheme of an invasion. They proved rather more costly than instructive. In December began the rearming of the artillery which the Boer War had shown to be very necessary; the new quick-firing guns—a 12½-pounder for the Horse Artillery, and an 18½-pounder for the Field Artillery—were believed to be really efficient.

Church affairs for once provided something almost like a popular interest. The case of the Free Church of Scotland was, indeed, in its reality as far as possible removed from the popular mind of England. Only in Scotland could a public be found hard-headed enough and sufficiently grounded in ecclesiastical controversy to follow the terrific metaphysical arguments before the House of Lords. The majority of the Free Church had in 1900 come to terms of union with the United Presbyterians, healing the famous breach of an earlier day. A minority of the Free Church —a small minority, the "Wee Frees" their countrymen called them—denied the right of the majority to consider this the end of the Free Church as a separate body, and claimed all the material goods of the Church. The Edinburgh Court of Session decided against them, on the broad ground that to refuse to acknowledge the majority must hamper religious growth. The House of Lords, however, pinning itself strictly and heroically to the pure metaphysics of faith, upheld the Wee Frees, and put them in possession of something like four millions of property. This at least was real to the English public, and it took a kind of sporting interest in the decision. The Church of England remained successful in avoiding the deep ritual controversy; Dr Wace, who had become Dean of Canterbury in succession to Dr Farrar in 1903, followed up the Round Table Conference by proposing that the basis of ritual practice should be the established uses of the Christian Church in the first six centuries of its existence. Compromise lay in too

delicate a balance to be capable of accurate adjustments like this. Militant Church energy was for the moment engrossed chiefly in the region of education. Radical county councils in Wales, not content with passive resistance, were so applying their powers as to render it unlikely that Church schools under their control would obtain any funds from the rates. On the other hand, the Government was wounded in the house of its friends when the Church Schools Emergency League publicly resented a circular of the Board of Education which intimated that school time-tables allotting time for the children's attendance at church would not be sanctioned. The insistence of the league in such a matter was exactly the kind of sectarian spirit which Unionists did not want in the foreground; it went no small distance towards justifying Nonconformist refusal to pay rates for Church schools. The Board of Education was vigorously directed now, having been largely reconstituted under the Act of 1902, and placed under a secretary brought in from outside the regular Civil Service—Mr Robert Morant.

The growing strength of new movements in art and new standards of appreciation was revealed by the inquiry this year into the administration of the Chantrey Trust. The money, left by Sir Francis Chantrey to the Royal Academy, for the purchase of the best current work year by year in England, was never expended outside the walls of the Academy, although that had long ago ceased to be the only great public exhibition of pictures and sculpture. Moreover its disposal inside the Academy was bitterly criticised. A House of Lords committee was set up and art critics girded their loins for a joyous fray. It was a little more joyous than they had bargained for; they met in Lord Carlisle, himself an artist of no mean reputation, a very doughty defender of the management of the trust, and, as he was also a wit, the crossing of swords was remarkably brisk.

The interest in the Tariff controversy was, as has been said, extraordinarily maintained. Mr Chamberlain spoke in August at Welbeck, coming to closer quarters now with the agricultural interest, which had been postponed at first to industrial interests. They were not very close quarters. He tended in the main to plead that agriculture and manufacture should not be regarded as in "water-tight compartments"; what was good for the one would help the other. He did not put forward his two-shilling corn-duty as a protection to agriculture, because it was of the essence of the Tariff Reform League's recommendation of the scheme in towns that the tax would be insufficient to raise the price of bread. But a population more generally in employment must, he said, mean better prices for the agriculturist, and more stimulus to organisation by co-operative marketing, land banks, etc. The speech rather added to, than diminished, the openings for attack by the Free Traders. The tide still set in their direction. They had won a seat at Devonport in June by a majority of over 1000, and in the same month increased their former majority in the Market Harborough division; at a by-election in the Chertsey division of Surrey, a thoroughly Unionist neighbourhood, though they failed to capture the seat, they halved the Unionist majority. At a by-election in the Thanet division of Kent, several leading Unionists had signed the Liberal candidate's nomination papers. It was no wonder that a speech by Mr Balfour at Edinburgh in October was looked upon as a distinct sign of "hedging." He repudiated any Protectionist intentions—his proposals were not Protectionist. You could protect industries against the attack of foreign governments, delivered by such means as the bounty and drawback systems, without protecting them against honest manufacturing competition. But what caused most stir was his statement that, if the Unionists were again returned to power, they would consider it their duty to call a Colonial conference before

proposing a tariff; and he implied that that tariff would be referred to another general election before it was enforced. This looked very much like a shelving of Colonial preference indefinitely, Liberals asserting roundly that, when it came to details at a conference, no tariff would ever be drawn up to command adhesion. Moreover, Mr Chamberlain had been involved so deeply in the Protectionist accretions on his original scheme that Mr Balfour's remarks might mean a parting of the ways. But Mr Chamberlain, speaking soon afterwards at Luton, the centre of the straw-hat industry, in pursuit of his campaign on particular manufactures, welcomed Mr Balfour's declaration. The suggestion may be offered that the difficulty which many people felt in understanding Mr Balfour's position arose largely from the modern habit of keeping a very short memory for public affairs. This was due to the enormous increase of newspaper-reading. With the whole world brought freshly to their breakfast-tables each day by the incessant activities of the telegraph, men lost much of their sense of continuity; editors could hardly publish a paragraph on some affair of a month or a fortnight previously without a footnote to explain the references. One of the most curious features of Mr Chamberlain's campaign was the fact that it presented itself to the great majority of the people as a wholly new idea. It would not, perhaps, have been surprising that a younger generation should forget the "Fair Trade" movement of the early eighties.[1] But it might reasonably surprise Mr Balfour that the country should so soon have forgotten the financial discussions which immediately preceded Mr Chamberlain's famous speech in May 1903.[2] From several points of view, as we have seen, Unionists were then approaching a determination to reconsider the customs tariff. Moreover, for years past the Budget had always been accom-

[1] Vol. i., pp. 57, 171.

[2] See p. 184.

panied by comments on the obvious discrepancy between an increasing national turnover in trade and a perpetual liability to deficits in the public revenue.[1] Mr Balfour continued, in fact, to maintain the attitude occupied by most of his party, and by not a few of the opposite party, before Mr Chamberlain's formulation of these tentative reconsiderations into a set fiscal policy. It is true that the launching of this policy would have cast suspicion upon any attempt to return even to the wider, yet historically "Free Trade" tariff of thirty or forty years earlier; and to that extent Mr Balfour's continuity of opinion had been falsified. But it was not fair to him that people should think of his position as one taken up scramblingly in response to Mr Chamberlain's movement. It was naturally capable of approximation to that movement; if the tariff was to be widened, the possibilities of retaliation against foreign duties, and of Colonial preference, might easily be taken into account. There was, however, nothing either incomprehensible or insincere in Mr Balfour's assertions that his was not a Protectionist policy; or in his refusal to sever himself from Mr Chamberlain. He represented exactly the development of Exchequer policy that would in all probability have taken place if Tariff Reform had not created a distrust of any extension of the list of dutiable articles. That the course of development was considerably modified by the new campaign was not any reason for allowing a wedge to be driven by opponents between himself and Mr Chamberlain.

Even on the Unionist side there would have been some relief if a wedge could have been driven. The party, as a parliamentary entity, did not know where it stood. Mr Balfour professed adherence to a policy of inquiry, followed, in the event of victory at the next election, by a Colonial conference, but without intention of deliberately

[1] See pp. 45, 155.

protecting industry. But then Mr Chamberlain, who was dealing with industry after industry, lamenting its accomplished or approximate downfall. and implying that his scheme would arrest the process, was publicly welcoming Mr Balfour's words. Many would have rested content with a policy of inquiry, little inspiriting though it was as a programme of leadership. But they could not escape the feeling that they were really being hustled to something much more definite, and would awake to find that, pursuing Mr Balfour, they had somehow come up with Mr Chamberlain. Was either of them really in command? Had not the Tariff Reform League taken charge ? They saw one of their soberest newspapers, *The Standard*, pass into the hands of Mr Pearson, an avowed Protectionist, and a prominent member of the Tariff Commission ; they heard rumours (promptly denied, it must be added) that even *The Times* might change hands. The ground seemed uncertain beneath their feet. The Unionist party organisation had definitely taken the step of allegiance to Mr Chamberlain, as against the Duke of Devonshire, who had attempted to maintain its original character as a body concerned with Irish legislation. As it happened, events in that connection towards the end of the year still further shook the Ministerialists. Lord Dunraven put forward, rather suddenly, a suggestion for "Legislative Devolution," which involved setting up a local legislature in Dublin to deal with Irish business, while avoiding matters of Imperial concern. It could hardly be regarded as anything but Home Rule under another name. Yet it came from a Unionist peer ; and what made it more serious was that Sir Antony Macdonnell, who at the end of a distinguished career in India had been appointed Under-Secretary for Ireland by Mr George Wyndham, was known to be concerned in the scheme, at least to the extent of advocating a financial "devolution." Mr Wyndham hastened to declare that the party was still "against any multiplication

of legislative bodies." But there remained an uncomfortable feeling that some sort of coquetting with Home Rule was going on; and it added gravely to the party's embarrassment and uneasiness. If Mr Chamberlain, as appeared by his action in the matter of the Liberal Unionist Association, put his present campaign in a position which overruled the old meaning of the association, could that meaning be said to have any vitality at all?

For the most part the Unionist Free Traders refused to be excommunicated, and fought for their own hand. One of them, who had now come definitely into the front rank, Mr Winston Churchill, declined an equivocal standing, and joined the Liberals. He had previously shown himself almost too democratic for the other side; and had been warned of his tendency to pursue "the somewhat devious paths by which his father climbed to power."[1] Before the notable new recruit joined them, Liberals lost a veteran from among their leaders. Sir William Harcourt, who had just inherited the family property at Nuneham, and, hoping for repose in that peaceful place, had intimated that he would not stand another election, died rather suddenly before he could attain his hope. His career had at the moment the melancholy aspect of frustration. His last years were belittled by the perpetual appearance of jealousy between him and Lord Rosebery, from the time when Lord Rosebery, and not he, had been sent for by the Queen in succession to Mr Gladstone. He was loyal to the true Gladstonianism in his attitude throughout the war; but he was also Gladstonian in regard to modern social movements, and never understood the position of labour. Still, he might have led the party, but for a certain overbearing habit of mind; it came out even in the long lectures which he read the Church of England on ritual subjects. Colleagues often found it difficult to work with him, and shrank from the prospect of working under him.

[1] *The Times*, 14th August 1903.

It remained his greatest glory to have achieved the one strikingly original conception of his time in national finance. The Death Duties of his Budget of 1894 had established themselves firmly in our fiscal system, and never failed in their productiveness.

CHAPTER XI

1905 : ACADEMIC DISCUSSION

THE winter was a bad one for workmen. A grave lack of employment set in, and so much distress had been anticipated that a conference was held at the Local Government Board in the autumn of 1904. Relief works, as such, were not favoured ; the conference devoted itself rather to devising schemes of intercommunication between local authorities, whereby any openings elsewhere might be made known in congested districts. The suggestion was made that any work projected by a local authority should be hurried forward, so as to absorb some labour during the distressed period. This constituted an attempt at least to arrive at a new formulation of the problem of the unemployed. Labour had little mobility ; and once it became congested in certain areas it was helpless. At the same time the ordinary processes of trade, using labour as raw material was used, were apt to set loose floating masses of it. A few firms made deliberate efforts to hold their workers together. Some years previously Messrs Cadbury had built a model village at Bourneville, near Birmingham, for the employees in their cocoa-works ; and in 1904 Messrs Rowntree had done the same thing at New Earswick, near York. These were regarded as rather philanthropic than business methods ; but when Messrs Lever, the soap manufacturers, built a model village at Port Sunlight, near Liverpool, it looked as if the decasualisation of labour might have a real business value in enhancing the energy, steadiness and intelligence of employees. The promoters of the Garden City Movement now put forward the possi-

bility of transferring large works to the country, and thereby relieving town congestions. The garden city idea had gained its first strength from the middle-class reaction towards a country life.[1] But inherent in it was the belief that healthier conditions, and the decentralisation made possible by railway services, would help the efficiency of industry. These, however, were long-range attacks upon the problem. For the present, the bulk of the difficulty fell back upon the Central Unemployed Committee in London, which managed to find employment for 6000 men. An attempt was made this year to deal with the matter by legislation; a Bill was passed proposing to set up bodies, half-way between the Poor Law Guardians and private charity, which should provide work on farm colonies (an acknowledgment of Mr Joseph Fels's ideas) without the disqualification attaching to poor relief.

The unemployed were a standing argument for the Tariff Reform movement. True, it was one of the wide arguments which on either side irritated opponents by their facility. The Free Traders' contrast between the big loaf and the little loaf was resented by the Tariff Reformers; the latter's argument that retaliatory duties would provide "work for all" was equally resented by the Free Traders. Yet a political subject could hardly be rampant on every platform in the kingdom without producing these sweeping generalisations. Behind them acute brains were at work; no question has ever been argued better in England. The most fundamental aspects of commerce were unearthed. Did Protection actually create trade, or only affect distribution? Did Free Trade tend to the abolition of elementary forms of manufacture in favour of the more advanced and skilled forms? Was not the phrase "invisible exports" merely another way of saying that we paid for the surplus of our imports in cash, instead of in exports that had given

[1] See p. 138.

employment ? Was it, on the other hand, possible in the last resort to pay (whatever the material of payment) in anything but work ? If we cut down our imports from a foreign nation, did we, or did we not, thereby destroy work that would have paid for those imports ? Of equal value with this seriousness of argument was the wholly new importance given to the interpretation of returns and statistics. The monthly returns of the Board of Trade appeared beyond all cavilling prosperous. But the figures of our trade were given in pounds sterling, and a rise in market prices might conceal a decline in volume of output and therefore in labour. The relations between wages and cost of living, the proportion of re-exports to the gross imports, the comparative figures of unemployment in this country and elsewhere, comparative prices of means of life, comparative hours of work—all these, and many other such points, were hotly debated. From the intricate transactions of a bill broker's office to the making of pearl buttons no single stone in our commercial structure was left unexamined. On neither side were the sweeping generalisations an outcome of laziness.

Yet, if no question had ever been so handsomely discussed in this country; none had ever placed party voters in such a predicament as that now experienced by Unionists. In the Home Rule split the two wings of Liberalism had been led with determination in two clearly opposite directions. In the later difficulties of Liberalism the Imperialists had frankly repudiated the party leader at the polls. Unionists were now confronted with a situation in which their leader was not repudiated, yet the policy which Liberals were attacking was not the official policy of that leader. Mr Balfour had begun the year by refusing to refer to the fiscal controversy in his speeches, leaving the propaganda to Mr Chamberlain. This attitude, since his constituency was East Manchester, in the cradle of Free Trade, made his meetings there so full of interruptions

that it was hard indeed to remember, in reading the reports, that they were meetings addressed by a Prime Minister. He abandoned his attitude so far as to produce in January, at one of his meetings, in response to a challenge by Mr Morley, the famous statement of his policy "on a half-sheet of notepaper." These were the contents of the half-sheet: "First, I desire such an alteration of our fiscal system as will give us a freedom of action impossible while we hold ourselves bound by the maxim that no taxation should be imposed except for revenue. It will strengthen our hands in any negotiations by which we may hope to lower foreign hostile tariffs. It may enable us to protect the fiscal independence of those colonies which desire to give us preferential treatment. It may be useful where we wish to check the importation of those foreign goods which, because they are bounty-fed or tariff-protected abroad, are sold below cost price here. Such importations are ultimately as injurious to the consumer as they are immediately ruinous to the producer. Secondly, I desire closer commercial union with the colonies, and I do so because I desire closer union in all its best modes, and because this particular mode is intrinsically of great importance, and has received much Colonial support. I also think it might procure great and growing advantages both to the colonies and to the Mother Country by promoting freer trade between them. No doubt such commercial union is beset with many difficulties. These can best be dealt with by a Colonial conference, provided its objects are permitted to be discussed unhampered by limiting instructions. Thirdly, I recommend, therefore, that the subject shall be referred to a conference on those terms. Fourth, and last, I do not desire to raise home prices for the purpose of aiding home production."

Mr Balfour could fairly assert that this document embodied all the prominent aspects of the question; it included Colonial preference, retaliation against hostile

tariffs, and the prevention of "dumping" (as the importation of goods "below cost price" was called). Was it not, then, a definite piece of leadership? But nearly two months elapsed before Mr Chamberlain and a conference of Tariff Reformers decided on hearty acceptance of the "half-sheet." This delay stimulated the feeling of uncertainty, and made unreal the announcement of loyal adhesion to Mr Balfour, when at last it was made. The agitation against which the Liberals were working did not desire the enunciation of our freedom from the maxim of taxation for revenue; it desired the imposition of a tariff. It did not wish that tariff to be dependent on the decisions of a Colonial conference. Unionists felt, rightly or wrongly, that behind Mr Balfour's promises of consideration and inquiry they were being "rushed," and rushed not so much by Mr Chamberlain as by an organisation suspiciously packed with manufacturers. The questions their constituents put to them were aimed at this organisation; they had to reply from the wholly different plane of Mr Balfour. He had manœuvred them into "dead ground," where they could not respond to the enemy's fire, but were peppered by their own shrapnel. It was a wholly false relief when Mr Balfour, adopting the attitude that debates on the subject in the House were purely "academic," since the Government did not propose to take any steps, advised his party to abstain from the division, and himself walked out. Certainly divisions were not to be desired by the Government; on a motion by Mr Churchill against preferential duties the Ministerial majority had fallen to forty-two. Yet abstention from the lobbies, besides having the absurd effect of placing on the Journals of the House an unopposed decision against the programme which Mr Balfour said he "desired," and which Mr Chamberlain was preaching as the whole duty of Unionists, had also an appearance of callousness to feeling outside the House.

It was, no doubt, true that Liberals thirsted to pursue in the House the advantage they were gaining outside. Mr Balfour's difficulty arose from his continuance in office in almost unparalleled circumstances.

The general assumption was that he wished by every possible means to avoid making an appeal to the country from a hopelessly divided party. Mr Chamberlain had asked at first for inquiry. Mr Balfour had not found himself so wedded to Free Trade principles as to be unable to go so far as this. But the inquiry had arisen spontaneously. It was no longer a question of returning a government to investigate, but one of returning either a government which should alter our fiscal relations, or one which should not. The only hope then was to prolong the period of discussion, in order that the more exact arguments might have time to emerge from the generalities, in order even that Unionists should have time to learn the arguments; in order lastly, perhaps, that the actual proposals might shake themselves clear of the obscuring cloud of Protectionist schemes which had with such violent energy swarmed upon Mr Chamberlain's idealism. This last hope is clear from a pronouncement by Mr Chamberlain at Birmingham quite late in the year, when there was no longer much doubt of an approaching election; he said that there would be no possibility of a reversion to Protection; all that was wanted was a modification of the Free Trade system.[1] It seemed that Mr Balfour remained in office to try to take to the polls a party enunciating a policy of its own, and not forced merely to defend against Liberals the policy of the Tariff Reform League. He wanted to occupy a kopje of his own choosing, and to bring the Liberal attack upon this; the kopje against which that attack was being directed had been so bombarded that its trenches, to an army being forced back upon it, appeared little but pitfalls.

[1] *The Times*, 4th November 1905.

But, in avoiding one danger, Mr Balfour was caught by another. He gave his opponents what amounted to a year's start in an election campaign. The party in office must as a rule be more on the defensive than on the offensive. Moreover a session with an insignificant legislative programme made administration peculiarly liable to attack. The uneasiness caused by Lord Dunraven's devolution proposals was busily kept alive. It was seen that Sir Antony Macdonnell's position offered the best point of concentration. The Government was not allowed to ride off on the line that he was a subordinate official. Could that description, it was asked, properly be applied to one who had been lieutenant-governor of an Indian province? A man did not return from the crest of one service to take a merely subordinate post in another. It was, in any case, curious that a distinguished Indian civilian should join the executive in Ireland. The next step in conjecture was boldly taken: Mr Wyndham must have promised Sir Antony Macdonnell somewhat the position of a colleague, and in that case there had been more than coquetting with Home Rule. The conjecture proved to be not far astray, as regarded the terms on which Sir Antony took office. Now arose an outcry from Unionists; Mr Wyndham might make all manner of explanations, but, while Sir Antony remained in his post, the explanations were futile. The correspondence between the two on the subject of the under-secretaryship was published; the Government majority on an Irish question fell to forty-two. This state of affairs could not last; Mr Wyndham had to resign, which he did on 6th March. He had by general consent done brilliantly with the Irish Land Bill; he was well liked in the House, and his term of office in Ireland had been calm and hopeful. To Irish Unionists this hopefulness had now a suspicious tinge. No trafficking with Nationalist ideals could be allowed, and Mr Wyndham was thrown over. The whole affair damaged Mr Balfour's

position; either he had not kept an eye on his Chief Secretary, or he had made a Strafford of him. It was not thought at all improbable that, with the warning of the by-elections before his eyes, Mr Balfour had conceived the possibility of withdrawing Irish support from the Liberals in the next House of Commons. What was described as "the severest electoral blow that the Government has had to suffer" occurred in April.[1] At Brighton, with all its naturally Conservative traditions and feelings, a Unionist majority of 2000 was swept away, and a Liberal returned, in spite of the Unionist candidate being a well-known resident. There were undoubtedly special elements in the contest, the local Unionists disliking the arrangements proposed by the central organisation for the next general election; Sir Edward Clarke, who had opposed the war, being a prospective Unionist candidate. But while this accounted for part of the turnover, the fear of a rise in prices under a tariff alarmed lodging-house keepers, as it had done in the Thanet election, where Margate and Ramsgate were concerned. Moreover, the dislike of Chinese labour on the Rand was as active here as it had been in other constituencies. In vain the use made of this cry by the Opposition was denounced by Ministerialists; in vain were their attacks described as "clouds of sentimental error."[2] In vain was it pointed out that, if the actual labourers were Chinese, the opening and working of the mines (which would not have occurred, it was remarked, without them) gave employment to white overseers and white employees of other kinds. The stubborn fact remained that, after all the cost of the war, the mine-owners had been allowed to import cheap labour on ignominious terms. Hence the strength of the double attack of the Radicals—that the war had been fought on behalf of, if not actually at the bidding of, a number of

[1] *The Times*, 6th April 1905.
[2] *Ibid.*, 18th March 1904.

more or less alien financiers, and that the Government had consented to the establishment of a form of slavery. Both were sweeping generalisations, of the kind that produced so much irritation in the tariff controversy. But both had a substratum of truth. The mine-owners had certainly been allowed to force their case; and the indentured Chinese were in no sense members of the community. Such heat of feeling was engendered that Mr Lyttelton was howled down in the House by the Opposition when the subject came up in debate, and the sitting had to be adjourned. Mr Balfour himself was similarly howled down on another occasion. These were undignified incidents in an undignified session.

It ran its course for the regulation period. But little reality was in it. When the Government began to talk of some redistribution resolutions—a hint of dissolution—it came out that Mr Balfour had taken so perfunctory an interest in them that he had not even consulted the Speaker as to the procedure. The resolutions, it was ruled, could not be submitted *en bloc*, but must go into Committee under eight or nine heads. They had to be dropped. Mr Balfour was uncertain about his followers, who were becoming increasingly slack in attendance; and on 20th July, upon a motion by the Irish leader, Mr Redmond, for reducing the salary of the Chief Secretary, the Ministry was defeated by 199 votes to 196. This was not a small House; and only two days earlier Mr Balfour, at a party meeting, had been urgent with his supporters to attend more faithfully. It was not an impossible opportunity for resignation; and the mass of Unionists in the country were really more annoyed than the Liberals when Mr Balfour refused to resign. They could not understand what he was waiting for, with the building, so to speak, crumbling about his ears. There was in the constituencies much less hope of the emergence of a party policy than Mr Balfour himself would appear to have been led by.

Every incident seemed to occur with some grudge against the Government. With trade not yet on its feet again, and a disturbed feeling, due to the invasions of American capital,[1] that big combinations were in the air, of which the first profits went to the promoters,[2] the revenue remained stagnant. It was, indeed, only £24,000 under the estimate; but that result had been achieved by a greater stringency in the collection of income-tax, which had thereby produced an unexpected million and a quarter. Useful as the greater stringency might be, it was not quite the way for an expiring government to recommend itself to the country. Then an extraordinary religious revival in South Wales, due to the preaching of Evan Roberts, gave backing to the Nonconformist resentment of the Education Act, and to the Liberal attacks on the Licensing Act; it flung at the Ministry the unpleasant cry of "Beer and the Bible." The revival half-emptied—in some places more than half emptied—the public-houses and the football grounds. It made the light of the Torrey-Alexander mission in London, taking place at this date, show rather pale.

The promise of a payment of thirty millions from the Transvaal towards the war proved double-edged. It had sounded well at first; but as time went on, and nothing more was heard of it, it opened another point of attack. The Boers were declining to take any part in public life until responsible government should be granted; and Lord Milner, coming home in March and closing his term of control in South Africa, came back to no striking reception. The appointment of a Royal Commission on War Stores revived the least happy passages in the Ministry's career; and the satisfaction with the progress of army reform was checked by the sudden announcement that a new rifle, shorter in the barrel than the existing one, was to be

[1] See p. 172.

[2] *The Times*, 1st January 1905.

introduced. This "arbitrary rearmament" [1] looked like a return from large matters to tinkerings.

When it began to be known that Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener were in acute disagreement, it seemed that even the ends of the earth were having their kick at the Ministry. Here was their own Viceroy, honoured by appointment to a second term of office—a thing which had never happened before—quarrelling publicly with the great soldier whom the Government had sent proudly to command in India three years ago. Lord Kitchener was at work reorganising the distribution and commands of the Indian army. The point of conflict was that Lord Kitchener wanted to abolish the Military Member of the Viceroy's council, holding that this post practically amounted to a dual control with the Commander-in-Chief ; while Lord Curzon maintained that the Viceroy must have the independent advice of the Military Member, and introduced a note of personal recrimination in remarking that Lord Kitchener had, after all, had the full support of the Council in his reforms. Lord Curzon in the end resigned ; but, though the Government was thus saved from the public blow that Lord Kitchener's resignation would have dealt it, it had given one more impression of muddling.

The failing heart of politics seemed to weaken the circulation all through the national system. It was a year without excitements or interests. The rather hazy popularity of Japan waxed with her deliberate, amazingly patient, amazingly gallant victories. Port Arthur fell in January, after eight months of isolation and five of actual siege, counting from the attack on the outlying defences. The story of every battle brought to England the same account of the Japanese coolness and disregard of death. In March the battle of Mukden, fought for several days, turned the Russians back practically into their old territory. In April the fleet of Admiral Rozh-

[1] *The Times*, 3rd February 1905.

destvensky, which had made a hesitating passage, appeared in the Pacific ; but displayed a tendency to hang about the coasts of French colonies, while Japan protested at this apparent affording of shelter, and France denied having any such intention. In August the fleet made its desperate effort to reach Vladivostok, fell into the grip of the Japanese fleet in the straits of Tsu-Shima, and was, at long range, pounded to extinction with hardly any casualties on the Japanese side. The apostles of efficiency took the opportunity offered by the popular enthusiasm for Japan ; she had shown how an efficient nation could carry through a war. It should be noted here that in February the international commission on the North Sea incident [1] gave its finding, practically granting all the British case ; the judgment was that there had been no torpedo boats among the fishing fleet, that the fishing fleet committed no hostile act, that the firing by the Russian fleet was not justified, and was continued too long.

The opening of the breach between Norway and Sweden —the ostensible bone of contention being Norway's demand for a separate consular service, which was merely a formula for her assertion of completely different interests in trade, manufacture and customs tariff—had more intimate associations for Great Britain than at first seemed likely. When the separation had been peaceably accomplished, Norway, looking round for a sovereign, offered her throne to Prince Charles of Denmark ; and, as he had married King Edward's youngest daughter, our King became related to one more European sovereign.

The quality of our agreement with France had been expressed in a phrase new to the British public. It hardly savours too much of cynicism to say that this fact greatly assisted the establishment of friendly feelings. The " entente cordiale " became a street catchword ; and so an idea that might have taken years to bear fruit

[1] See p. 220.

found its way at once to the populace. If it had remained entirely, or even almost entirely, on the diplomatic plane, it would have been seriously shaken this year. For, as far as the principal bargain was concerned, France appeared to have made a miscalculation. She had bargained a certainty in Egypt against a speculation in Morocco. The situation in Egypt had lasted long enough to make our position assured. But it soon appeared that there were others besides ourselves with a word to say about Morocco. The German Emperor visited Tangier in the spring of 1905; and in a speech there remarked that he could not allow any power to step between him and the free sovereign of a free country. Incidentally, this event gave a new text for the Free Traders. A nation that set up tariffs and protected markets, like the French, could not move a step towards new expansion without alarming a great trading nation like Germany. Expansion to France meant a new closed market: expansion to us meant a new open market for everybody. But this was a minor aspect of the affair. The more important aspect was that friction arose between France and Germany, and arose from an agreement of which we seemed to be getting the only profit. As it turned out, the storm fell solely upon M. Delcassé. King Edward went yachting in the Mediterranean in the spring, and, both on his way south and on his return, he stopped at Paris to visit President Loubet. M. Delcassé could not be saved. A logical people, like the French, could see the mistake he had made, and in June he resigned the Foreign Ministry. It was thought, perhaps with some truth, that Russia's grievous preoccupation in the Far East, paralysing her for the moment in Europe, had deprived M. Delcassé of power upon which he had relied. A meeting between the Tsar of Russia and the German Emperor on their yachts in the Baltic added to French uneasiness. But the friendliness with England stood the strain. The French fleet visited Spithead in July, and was fêted;

the Municipal Council of Paris visited the London County Council in September, and were received by the King.

But those who looked below the surface found more cause for anxiety than for ease. Superficially, it appeared we had advanced beyond our position of a few years back, when the whole Continent had been stirred against us by the Boer War. In the summing up of the career of Mr Balfour's Government after his resignation, the most prominent piece of enduring achievement was found in Lord Lansdowne's policy of ceasing "to treat foreign problems as isolated affairs."[1] This referred to his success in welding together in the Anglo-French agreement a variety of large and small questions which had for years been opened at any moment of strained relations. But he seemed to be little alive to the danger of the Anglo-French agreement becoming in a different sense an isolation of foreign problems, if it developed into an understanding exclusive of other nations. With an eye upon this danger a committee was formed in November of persons anxious to prevent this kind of impression arising in the mind of Germany.

It was a merit in Lord Lansdowne, less remarked at the time, but warmly appreciated by many who kept alive the Gladstonian belief in international righteousness, that he took a courageous and liberal attitude upon such subjects as Macedonia and the Congo. A rising in Macedonia had been severely repressed by Turkey in 1903. Those who set on foot relief funds for the oppressed had reason to be grateful to Lord Lansdowne for the support he gave them in enabling them to administer the fund in Macedonia. In the matter of the Congo, it was to Lord Lansdowne that the famous report of Consul Casement was due. The agitation for reform in the Congo had been gaining strength, slowly but surely. Suspicion arising from the testimony of missionaries, backed by the practical closing

[1] *The Times*, 5th December 1905.

of the trading districts to all but Belgian officials, and strengthened by the revelations of the vast revenue which the region was producing, had led to more deliberate inquiry. But while several people were vaguely concerned about the matter, one man made it his deepest concern. Mr E. D. Morel laboured unceasingly at collating all the evidence that could be gathered—the positive evidence, of witnessed cases of cruelty to natives, and the indirect evidence, implied in the concealment practised, and the enormous quantities of rubber which were produced—quantities which alone amounted almost to proof of the gravest extremes of forced labour. The Aborigines' Protection Society had prevailed upon Lord Lansdowne to authorise an investigation ; the Congo State had been founded by international agreement, and it could not be denied that any country concerned in that agreement had a right to be reassured as to the condition of the natives handed over by it. Consul Casement's report was the most serious justification of the charges of savage cruelty, murder, and conditions of slavery, prevailing under the administration of the King of the Belgians. It was an awful commentary on the enthusiasm with which this region had been handed over to the blessings of " civilisation." A public meeting in 1904 demanded an extension of the British consular service on the Congo, and the summoning of an international Conference of the Powers that had joined in founding the Congo State. Lord Lansdowne stood by the demand, and a conference, with Mr Casement's report before it, met in Brussels in January 1905. It was confronted with difficulties. The terms on which the territory was held, while they threw no responsibility on Belgium as a nation, yet allowed the King of the Belgians to play upon national susceptibilities. But by this time a force of opinion had been roused in Great Britain which, united into the Congo Reform Association, could not easily be destroyed.

In September Dr Barnardo died suddenly. His work for destitute children had become such a recognised and admirable part of the life of the nation that people realised almost with a shock the greatness of it as an individual achievement. He had set on foot forty years earlier, by his own unaided effort, an organisation which now possessed homes in London and the country capable of housing, educating and training for a useful life thousands of the waifs and strays of city streets. In the forty years he had rescued from the gutter no less than 60,000 children. They had been kept until they were fitted by training for artisan's work, for domestic service or for emigration; 17,000 had been sent to occupations in Canada. Helpers had gathered about him, and his work was now on a plane of established success. But at his grave his own great personal devotion was recognised.

Another by-election in the autumn, again a striking Liberal victory, the seat for the Barkston Ash division of Yorkshire being won against a Unionist candidate belonging to a great local family, Mr Lane-Fox, revived the weary wonder as to how many more blows Mr Balfour was going to await. Mr Chamberlain was openly pressing for a dissolution. The party, as he said at Birmingham, might lose the battle, but on what other issue than Tariff Reform would it be more likely to win? One incident occurred to demonstrate what it was that Mr Balfour had waited for. Speaking in November he appealed to the party to fight for his idea of a kind of educational campaign on the subject, which should end in empowering a Unionist Government to frame some suggestions. Mr Chamberlain promptly responded with an appeal to fight for the more drastic end of empowering a Unionist Government to set up a tariff, and then make its offers from a definite standpoint to the colonies. The issue was thus after all cleared only for the Liberals, and not at all for the Unionists. It hardly mattered to Liberals that Lord Rosebery,

speaking at Bodmin about this time, should repudiate Home Rule, and refuse emphatically to fight under that banner, to which Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had just been reasserting his allegiance. Differences of this kind were as nothing in the shadow of the more violently agitated question.

One card remained for Mr Balfour to play, and he played it. By resigning, rather than dissolving, he might so force into the open the old disagreements between the Radicals and the Liberal Imperialists that the Opposition, instead of carrying on triumphantly their Free Trade campaign, would be suddenly disunited and discountenanced by a public and ludicrous failure to form a ministry. The feeling for some time had been that, even if Mr Balfour's Government was weak, Liberals could hardly produce anything better. If Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman were sent for, would the Liberal Imperialists think of taking office under a man who had but lately been so unpopular? If Lord Rosebery were sent for, Radical extremists would be infuriated. By all the indications it was at least an open chance that there might be, if not actual failure to form a ministry, at any rate failure to form anything but a makeshift cabinet. By compelling the Liberals to present to a general election their actual cabinet, Mr Balfour might produce a spectacle which, even for the sake of Free Trade, the country might be unable to tolerate.

On 4th December, Mr Balfour therefore resigned; and on the 5th Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman became Prime Minister. Ten and a half years had passed since the last Liberal Government expired, and of that Government Sir William Harcourt, Lord Kimberley and Lord Herschell were dead; Lord Rosebery was ostentatiously standing aside; Lord Spencer was at the moment seriously ill; Lord Ripon was seventy-four, Sir Henry Fowler seventy-five; Sir George Trevelyan, Mr Shaw Lefevre, Mr Arnold Morley and Mr Arthur Acland were no longer in political life. Of men

of cabinet rank there remained only Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Mr Morley, Mr Asquith, Mr Bryce and Lord Tweedmouth. Men who had earned cabinet rank since those days were easily discerned in Sir Edward Grey, Mr Haldane, Lord Elgin, Sir Robert Reid, Mr Herbert Gladstone and Mr Lloyd George. Out of these two groups three of the most important men, Mr Asquith, Sir Edward Grey and Mr Haldane, were avowed Liberal Imperialists; Mr Asquith and Sir Edward Grey had both repudiated Home Rule. One curious element in the speculation of the moment must be mentioned. It was assumed at once that Labour would have a representative in the Cabinet.[1] Nothing could have shown more clearly the great advance which Labour politics had made. The last glimpse of an older fashion remained in the doubt whether this representative would be Sir Charles Dilke—who, though admirably informed on Labour questions and deeply understanding them, was of the cabinet tradition in rank—or whether it would be Mr John Burns. Speculation took another turn in the suggestion that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman might go to the House of Lords, partly because it was thought that he might not be a match for Mr Balfour and Mr Chamberlain in the Commons, and partly because, if the Liberal Imperialists had the chief places in the Commons, that might provide a bridge to bring them into the Cabinet; indeed, it was rumoured on 8th December that Sir Edward Grey had declined office because Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman refused to translate himself thus.

Rumour had but a few days in which to exercise itself. On 11th December the list of the new Government was published, and it was seen that there were no notable absentees. The list was almost dull, after the days of gossip about it. Nearly everything had fallen out in the most obvious way. Mr Asquith was at the Exchequer;

[1] See, *e.g.*, *The Times*, 5th December 1905.

Sir Edward Grey at the Foreign Office; Mr Haldane at the War Office. Sir Robert Reid was Lord Chancellor; Lord Elgin took the Colonial Office; Mr Lloyd George the Board of Trade; Lord Aberdeen the Viceroyalty of Ireland. One or two of the appointments were mildly surprising. Mr Morley went to the India Office; it was, perhaps, only his friends who fully understood to what degree the presence of this deeply philosophical, courageous and lofty mind in control of India would liberate the Ministry's energies for its home work. There were traps enough ready for any man in that post whose zeal was greater than his intellect. Mr Herbert Gladstone at the Home Office was a surprise of rather a different kind; but he might prove an able administrator. Mr Churchill, as Under-Secretary for the Colonies, was considered to be a rash experiment; he had a vigorous tongue, and the colonies were prone to stand on their dignity. Mr Birrell as President of the Board of Education was hailed as a distinctly happy thought; a man of letters with a turn for office could not be more neatly placed. The Labour member of the Cabinet had the office most naturally congenial to him: Mr John Burns was at the Local Government Board.

Not the smallest of small change for electoral purposes was, after all, to be got by the Tories out of Liberal disagreements; there was, indeed, some attempt to suggest that, if the Liberal Imperialists had joined the Government, a bargain must have been made which would hold back any legislation vigorously democratic. But there was a shrewd suspicion that there had been no bargaining; it was said that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had made his offers, had held no parleys, and had asked after a reasonable interval for a definite reply. There was a momentary recurrence of gossip in view of the forthcoming meeting of the Liberal League, which Lord Rosebery was to address; would there be any revelations? Lord

Rosebery, quietly congratulating the league on the presence in the Cabinet of three of its prominent members, remarked only that, for reasons unknown to him, but which obviously seemed to them good, they had taken office. It was hardly conceivable that, if there had been bargaining, he should not have known of it, nor been consulted.

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had the incidental honour of being the first Prime Minister with an official status as Prime Minister. Hitherto the chief adviser of the Crown had always held some office, even if only formally; the premiership had been a practice, not a constitutional position. The Premier, in matters of court precedence, took rank according to the Cabinet office he held, usually that of First Lord of the Treasury. King Edward had been desirous of regulating the position, and making the post of Prime Minister an office by itself. Mr Balfour preferred that the change should be made for his successor, and it waited therefore till Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's appointment. Then a Royal Warrant was issued, giving the Prime Minister precedence next after the Archbishop of York; and establishing his position as an office of State.

CHAPTER XII

1906 : LIBERALISM TAKES CHARGE

THE general election of January 1906 produced the most sweeping reversal of party balance ever experienced in the House of Commons. Parliament was dissolved on 8th January; and so keen was the eagerness to open the fray that one borough, Ipswich, went to the poll on 12th January—twenty-four hours ahead of what was generally regarded as the first possible polling day. This unprecedented effort gave the Liberals their first victory, the borough returning two Liberals, instead of one Liberal and one Conservative. The uncontested elections were extraordinarily few—no more than four or five in Great Britain. The first considerable polling day, 13th January, brought results so astounding that it appeared incredible that they could be real indications. In Manchester alone five seats had been won by the Liberals, and they included Mr Balfour's seat. When the excited crowds went to bed on that Saturday night the returns stood at 52 Liberal, Labour and Nationalist members, and 14 Unionists. There was at that moment one consideration with which Unionists could solace themselves. Lancashire had, as usual, been foremost in the polling, and in that county above all the Free Traders would be most sure of their ground. But the polls of Monday, spread over the whole country, were no less menacing. That day's results gave a return of 132 Liberals, Labour members and Nationalists, and only 30 Unionists. Mr Gerald Balfour and Mr Long had followed their leader into exile. On the Tuesday night

the Liberal gains already amounted to 84, and the Unionists had won but a single seat, that at Hastings ; two more members of the late ministry, Mr Lyttelton and Mr Arthur Elliot, had been defeated. With only 247 members of the new House returned, the majority of 68, with which the Unionists had gone to the country, had been converted to a minority of 98. A week after polling had begun, the Liberals had a majority which was independent of the Irish vote. With fading hopes, Unionists turned their eyes to the rural constituencies ; but these went as heavily against them as the towns. When the last returns were in, the total net gains of the Liberals stood at 212 ; and the astonishing new House was composed of 397 Liberals, 51 Labour members, 83 Nationalists and 157 Unionists. There was a possible maximum majority for the Government of 356 ; without the Nationalists it had a majority of 273 ; and, in the improbable event of the Nationalists and Labour members going into the division lobby with the Opposition, the Liberals singlehanded could defeat that combination by the handsome majority of 88.

The result baffled all attempts to explain it. Many of those who made attempts had been watching the course of the election from London, where it might well appear as almost a nightmare. The modern competition of newspapers for the public fancy turned the political contest into a kind of sporting race. They recorded its progress exactly as they had recorded contests for the America Cup, by coloured lights. At various points, such as the National Liberal Club on the Embankment and the corner buildings in Trafalgar Square, magic lanterns displayed the results on huge sheets. But the newspaper organisations fixed rather on the large space of waste ground at Aldwych, cleared by the County Council's improvement scheme, as the ideal spot for the show. Here night by night immense crowds blocked the roadways under a glare of coloured lights and magic lantern beams from half-a-

dozen buildings. The magic lanterns projected names and figures; the coloured rays, too impatient for the process of writing upon the lantern slides, darted blue or red into the air. From one roof blue and red rockets exploded, to carry news to inhabitants of the heights of the Crystal Palace or Hampstead. Blue and red Bengal fires would be burning in another place. The crowd, garishly illuminated, seemed in the mass to have no thought more stable than if it were still being informed about the America Cup. The cheering of a Liberal victory might be answered by a heavy roar of hooting; but in the next minute the defeat of Mr Balfour himself would be greeted with excited laughter. In the great genial easiness of the London crowd it was impossible to discern what was going on. Yet even London was stirred by the impulse at work, to the point of returning a remarkable proportion of Liberal members.

In their effort to understand the disaster which had overtaken them, Unionists agreed upon one point—that their organisation had been slack and imperfect. The inertia of the party had not been confined to the House of Commons; the constituencies had been neglected. They agreed also in attributing much to the swing of the pendulum. Unionism had had ten years of office; the country desired a change, and the events of the past two years—the disagreements about Tariff Reform, the maintenance in office of a weak cabinet, the uncertain leadership—had added impatience and irritation to the desire. The fate of the Unionist Front Bench certainly gave some reality to the traditional opinion of a defeated party that, however well governments did, the country always tired of them. The defeats of ministers and under-secretaries were as much a marked feature of this election as the extraordinary number of seats gained by the Liberals. Mr Balfour, Mr Lyttelton, Mr Walter Long, Mr Gerald Balfour, Mr Pretyman, Mr Arthur Elliot, Mr Brodrick,

Lord Stanley, Mr Ailwyn Fellowes, Mr Bonar Law ; and among members who had formerly been in office, Mr Chaplin and Sir William Hart Dyke—these made a total of twelve occupants of the Unionist Front Bench rejected by the electorate. Nor was the case less striking from the point of view of the offices they had held ; that the Prime Minister, the Colonial Secretary, the Secretary for War, the President of the Board of Trade, the President of the Local Government Board and the Postmaster-General of the late Unionist Government should all be defeated gave to the election results a flavour of something very much like deliberate punishment on the part of the nation.

To those who merely sought for the immediate explanations, the use made by the Liberals of their two main platform cries accounted for much. Unionists bitterly resented the employment by Liberals of certain cartoons and posters. One especially, representing Chinese in chained gangs being driven to the mines, was denounced as absolute misrepresentation. A Blue Book had been published, on the eve of the election, reporting on the comfortable conditions provided for the indentured labourers in the compounds ; and it was angrily urged that these conditions could not possibly be fairly spoken of as slavery, much less represented by chains. Yet the poster would have had little real effect had there not been, among ordinary Englishmen, a dislike both of the introduction of coolie labour and of the idea of the " compound " system. The fact that indentured coolie labour had gone on for years in other parts of the empire was of no avail against the unhappy prominence which it had attained in the case of the Rand. Nor could there be, in the last resort, much sympathy for the Unionists. That very Colonial ideal which they had done so much to foster played its part against them, in the resentment of the other colonies at the employment of Chinese. Moreover the plea, genuine

as it was, that the Rand mines would not be opened unless the Chinese Labour Ordinance were sanctioned, was an undignified position to have to take. It lent itself too easily to the view that we had fought for the mine-owners after all.

Unionist complaints about misrepresentation of the Tariff Reform ideal were also frequent, but are to be more easily dismissed. Wholesale catch-phrases about "the food of the people" were no more common than equally wholesale catch-phrases about "Work for All," or "The Foreigner will Pay," or "Tariff Reform means Social Reform." Argument both conscientious and acute was not lacking on either side. But the complicated movement which had sprung into being around Mr Chamberlain's central idea had this grave defect—it made visible the danger that, if once considerations other than those of revenue directed the framing of budgets, no one could arbitrarily limit those considerations. If a proposal for Colonial preference could so rapidly shift into proposals for retaliation on hostile tariffs, and for protection of home industries, if the ideal of a commercially united empire so naturally absorbed in its progress ideals of generally regulated imports, would not similar shiftings, similar absorptions, be likely to attend the framing of a tariff? It may have been an obscure feeling against Tariff Reform that turned the main current of the election; but a feeling is not necessarily the less genuine for being obscure. At any rate, so strong a national conviction, after two and a half years of incessant argument by either side, was a great and incontrovertible fact.

Beneath all the recriminations and all the analysing of party cries, both sides displayed a consciousness that there was profound and serious meaning in what had taken place. Both sides were startled. To account for the results by saying that the working men were having their day—that the franchise extensions of 1867 and 1885 had

now been given their first full expression by the generation that had come to electoral age since the Elementary Education Acts and the circulation of cheap newspapers—was too superficial to be satisfying.[1] The working man's politics were no longer the united Radical force of the Chartist days, and the most exclusively industrial towns could show a Unionist poll too considerable to be made up entirely of small tradesmen and out-voters. Yet it was plain that the Labour vote had become a new thing. In the constituencies accustomed to return Labour members—such as Newcastle, Northumberland, and some of the mining towns—the Labour majority had become overwhelming; in other industrial places—such as Barrow-in-Furness, Middlesborough, Stockport, St Helen's—Labour candidates had swept out of the field the Unionists who had held those seats. The Labour party for the first time became more than a group in the House; fifty-one members made it genuinely a fourth party. Here again there were immediate causes upon which the observer could put his finger. On the whole the past ten years had been fairly free from strikes; the forces of the trade unions had had time to take in the circumstances of their position, and to fix their eyes on far-reaching aims. Over-logical socialism had given place to a watchfulness for any promising opening for advancing Labour interests. The election of 1895 had turned the energies of Labour leaders into steady organising work.[2] The Taff Vale case came at exactly the right moment to fuse that work into a vital whole, to concentrate it upon a clear purpose.[3] Ever since that case the Labour leaders had had at their back an army answering to a purely Labour watchword. The combined workmen felt that, as long as the law held trade unions liable to be sued in damages for tortious

[1] See, *e.g.*, *The Times*, 16th January 1906.
[2] See vol. i., p. 372.
[3] See p. 119.

acts of members, and picketing and peaceful persuasion were held to be tortious acts, trade unions were paralysed. The central argument was that Parliament, when it sanctioned the trade unions, had never intended this; it was a mere flaw in the position, discovered by the ingenuity of lawyers, and it must be mended. The defeat of Sir William Hart-Dyke in a division of Kent which was almost a family possession was the most striking example of the influence of the Taff Vale case. By the railway vote in this constituency he was ousted for a Labour member.

But while the Taff Vale case served well enough as the obvious factor in the Labour party's success, it did not provide that deep meaning which both sides felt to be inherent in the election. Even when account had been taken of the lack of cohesion among Unionists on the Tariff Reform programme, the sum did not seem to be complete. The truth began, however, to emerge in a comment made before the election was over. "Speaking broadly, we should say that the result of the elections is a protest against dilettantism in politics, a vice common to both parties."[1] The phrasing was coloured by the now frequent misgivings as to Mr Balfour's leadership, the distrust of his "airiness" and elegant trifling. But that the comment itself was sound could be clearly proved by the new House when it met. It was largely a House of youngish men, still more a House of "new" men in politics. Just as the Reform Bill of 1832 had added the manufacturer and the man of business to the aristocrat and the man of affairs, so the election of 1906 added to those classes in the House the man of ideas and the sociologist. For the first time the Commons contained a large number of men who had entered it, not on the strength of their hereditary position, their local importance, their forensic skill, or their intellectual reputation; but solely on the basis of their sociological enthusiasm and their political idealism.

[1] *The Times*, 24th January 1906.

Never had there been a House so full of men whom a member in the late eighteenth century would have found it impossible to place in any category known to him. The type was, of course, more common on the Liberal side than among the Unionists; but even in the Opposition ranks could be found the man who had gone from his university, or even his school, into some activity of social reform, or some propaganda of the new political economy, and passed thence into Parliament. It is largely to that new political economy that we must look for the explanation of the general election of 1906. We have seen in the former volume of this history how the philanthropic spirit, by which the old individualist economy had been undermined, had given way, partly by the advance of Fabianism and Trade Unionism, partly by the philosophical thought associated with the name of T. H. Green, to a reformed political economy, a kind of economic sociology.[1] We have seen how this change was helped forward firstly by the inclusion of hygiene in the ideal of material progress; and secondly by the movement for efficiency in public administration.[2] We now add the important fact that the reaction against the purely philanthropic spirit was a return to belief in the efficacy of legislation.[3] The ineffectual career of the Liberal Government of 1892-1895 inflicted a set-back upon that belief. But it had recovered strength; it had become an enormous reservoir of power, waiting to be tapped. Mr Chamberlain had perceived its readiness, and had done it the honour of proposing to employ a new tap. The old served better.

As the Liberals had had less apparent prevision of the new forces, so now their acquaintance with them, gratifying as it was for the moment, brought some apprehen-

[1] See vol. i., pp. 111, 223; vol. ii., p. 27.
[2] See vol. i., p. 115; vol. ii., p. 136.
[3] See vol. i., p. 246.

sion to the thoughtful. This was perhaps best expressed in a letter from "A Liberal Voter," published in *The Times*,[1] suggesting that "the Labour vote had introduced into middle-class Liberalism, now perhaps for the last time triumphant, the seeds of disintegration." That was one more meaning discovered in the election results. But it was only a partial truth. Its flaw lay in the phrase "middle-class Liberalism": in the sense in which the writer employed the phrase, that Liberalism was already past its last triumph—the poor triumph of 1892. As the new Government pursued its course it became abundantly clear that it represented a new Liberalism. Throughout the election the reliance of Liberals was placed, even if sometimes unconsciously, upon a wider basis than its old middle-class support. Symptoms of this reliance can be found in items of the programme put forward at the National Liberal Federation's meeting in 1905—such items as legislation on trade disputes, the taxation of site values, small holdings, the payment of members, and especially, perhaps, in the introduction for the first time of a resolution that "the disabilities of sex in the Parliamentary and local suffrage should be removed." The most deliberately democratic appeal of all did not appear in any programme, but it played a large part in the election. It was to be found at its clearest and best in Sir Charles Dilke's speeches. He frequently directed the working man's hopes towards a great Budget which should not only be aimed at bringing into the State coffers a larger proportion of the wealth of individuals, but should "entail legislation outside its own sphere"—a Budget, that is, which should be a kind of nursing mother of social reforms. This was to be the real answer to Tariff Reform. A customs tariff was, after all, a middle-class idea, a middle-class conception for meeting the cost of social reform. The new Liberalism would find one that was not middle-class

[1] 31st January 1906.

in conception. As for unconscious regard paid by Liberals during the election to the new forces, it can be seen in the broad play upon instinctive dislike of the Chinese labour expedient, and instinctive mistrust of Tariff Reform. It can even be seen in the comparatively slight place taken in the election by Home Rule. Heated controversy on that subject had always been more characteristic of the middle-classes than of the working man, who was not deeply interested, either for it or against it.

Apart from other considerations, there was no need for the Liberals to make much of Home Rule in this election. Before the polls began, Mr Redmond had taken up a position which prevented any possibility of co-operation with the Unionists; he had repeated the full Nationalist demand, which would not be satisfied with "devolution," but only with an Irish Parliament, and an executive responsible to that parliament. The most that Unionist candidates could hope for was to make capital out of the difference between Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's frank declaration of adherence to Home Rule and Sir Edward Grey's statement that progress in that direction must be gradual—that no thorough-going Bill would be passed without an appeal to the country. The fact was that the events ending in the resignation of Mr George Wyndham had relieved the Liberal party of any need to bid for Irish support; it had become again the party to which the Nationalists were compelled to look. Nor was it difficult for them to look hopefully towards a cabinet which, if it contained Sir Edward Grey and Mr Asquith, contained also Mr Morley, to maintain the Gladstonian tradition, and a strong contingent of democratic Radicalism.

Home Rule occupied, in fact, a prominent place in the King's Speech at the opening of Parliament on 20th February, though the terms of the reference to it were vague, and without promise of immediate action. The

two most important items of the speech concerned matters to which the Liberals had professed their paramount duty —a new Education Bill and a Trade Disputes Bill. But far more interesting at the moment than either of these was that passage in the speech which dealt with South African affairs. It was stated definitely that no more licences would be issued for importing Chinese labourers ; and that, as soon as the details of the constitution could be worked out and drafted, self-government would be bestowed upon the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony. The Chinese labour decision was drastic. It was, and had been throughout the election, open to the Opposition to score the point that, if Chinese labour was indeed the slavery which Liberals alleged it to be, then they could not do less than repatriate the Chinese out of hand. If they did not do so, manifestly the cry of " slavery " was insincere. This was a neat " score," but the Government could afford to leave it as a score. An attempt had indeed been made to interfere at once with the indentured immigration. A few days before the Unionists surrendered office, licences had been issued for the importation of 14,000 Chinese. It was a much larger number than usual, and this suggested that the mine-owners, aware of, or suspecting, the imminence of a change of government, had hurried to secure a big draft, in case it should be the last. The Liberal Cabinet wished to prevent the landing of these 14,000 ; but found that, once the licences were issued, there was no way of interfering. For some time afterwards it continued to be a Unionist taunt that the " slaves " were still left, in spite of the hot Liberal indignation ; those already indentured were allowed to serve out their term. But the concession did no real harm to the Government, which showed at any rate some courage in flatly overriding the power of the Transvaal authorities to issue the licences ; Mr Lyttelton had been explaining carefully during the election that, once the Ordinance was allowed, the issue of licences was

not in his hands. Moreover the Cabinet maintained its attitude when self-government was granted to the colony; the letters patent, reciting specifically "Whereas it is Our will and pleasure that all persons within Our dominions shall be free from any conditions of employment or residence of a servile character," placed questions of imported labour among the subjects of legislation which the Governor had not power to assent to, but must reserve for the Home Government's decision.

The session was not an easy one. The Trade Disputes Bill, as introduced by the Government, did not wholly satisfy the Labour party, and a Bill was also introduced by Mr Hudson, one of the Labour members. In the end an important clause from this latter Bill was incorporated in the Government measure, which in its final form virtually abolished the last application of the law of conspiracy to trade unions, and enacted that what was legal for an individual should be legal for a combination of individuals, thus permitting peaceful persuasion, picketing, and other such methods during a strike; it also enacted that the funds of trade unions should not be liable to actions for damages. Much more serious difficulty attended the Education Bill. This was largely due to the Government's attempt to make, not a mere reversal of the Act of 1902, as was alleged to be their object, but a measure which would leave no section of the community as seriously aggrieved as the Nonconformists had been by that Act. The chief proposal of the new Bill was that, in order to make all public elementary schools "provided" schools, the local authorities should arrange with the managers of voluntary schools for the use of the buildings on five days of the week, leaving them to the managers on Saturday and Sunday, the local authorities in return becoming responsible for the upkeep and repair of the school buildings. The local authority was to have the sole power of appointing teachers; no religious tests were to be applied

in the appointments, and teachers under the local authority were not to be allowed to give instruction on Saturday and Sunday. This fully met the Nonconformist position. But it was also proposed that in towns, facilities for denominational teaching should be given in schools taken over by the local authority, if four-fifths of the parents of children attending the school expressed a wish for it, and if, further, there were schools available for children whose parents preferred the undenominational teaching. The Bill never had a united force of opinion behind it. Nonconformists disliked the concession of denominational teaching in any schools at all. The Labour members disliked the perpetuation of undenominational teaching as much as they disliked this particular concession ; they wished for a wholly secular system. The Irish members, while admitting that the concession would meet for the most part the Roman Catholic demand (since the strength of Roman Catholicism was chiefly in towns), disliked the stipulation for a four-fifths vote from the parents. English Churchmen joined in this dislike. But the question of the proportion of parents that should settle the matter was but a small, though persistent, part of the Opposition's antagonism to the Bill. The confining of denominational teaching in voluntary schools to two days of the week ; the power of the local authority to appoint all teachers ; the absolute forbidding of the teachers to give instruction on Saturday and Sunday—these proposals were enough to destroy the Government's hope of allaying the Nonconformist grievance without aggrieving others. Churchmen denounced the Bill at large for endowing undenominationalism, while refusing to support denominationalism—that is, for deciding arbitrarily that one form of religious teaching was good and another bad. The Bill had some uncomfortable moments even in the House of Commons ; on one amendment in July, when the Ministerial whips were taken off, and the question left to the unfettered

judgment of the House, the Government majority was only sixteen. When the Bill reached the House of Lords in October, that assembly made no pretence of accepting it. Drastic amendments were introduced into practically every clause. The action taken by the Government, when the amended Bill was returned to the House of Commons, was extremely important. It proposed that the amendments introduced by the Lords should be considered, not in detail, but "as a whole," the House agreed to this course, and proceeded to reject the amendments "as a whole" by a majority of 416 to 107. This meant that the work of the Lords was regarded, not as a fair attempt to meet Nonconformist grievances from the Church point of view, but as a determination to maintain the position under Mr Balfour's Act. In other words, the Lords were treated as holding the fort on behalf of the enfeebled Opposition against the Liberal majority, in a particularly flagrant manner, since the Liberals had everywhere announced to their supporters that an Education Bill would be their first care. On the second appearance of the Bill in the House of Lords, Lord Lansdowne expressed strong objection to the course taken by the Government, and the House insisted on its amendments. Thereupon the Government announced on 20th December that it would proceed no further with the Bill.

Thus opened another fundamental contest raised by the astonishing general election. Could this new House of Commons—new in so many traits of outlook, of reliance upon the electorate, of political philosophy—coexist with a Second Chamber unaffected by the vote of constituencies? The answer of Conservatives was, broadly, that with our electoral system it was possible for the House of Commons to be a complete misrepresentation of the state of feeling in the country. A bare majority sufficed to put a member into the House; and it was therefore not unfair that some automatic check in the constitution should represent the

many Tory votes which had just failed to keep Liberals out. The weakness of this answer was that the Lords had hitherto never represented the many similar Liberal minorities when Unionists were in office. They had not, for instance, on this very matter of education, paid heed to Nonconformist dislike of the Act of 1902, as they now paid heed to Church dislike of the Bill of 1906. Extreme democratic opinion also chafed at the conception of an automatic check. It is quite possible that in their dealings with the Education Bill the Lords intended no more than a strong reminder to the Government that it must regard its majority rather as a great asset for bargaining purposes than as a supreme authority. The rejection of their amendments as a whole, with the consequent repudiation of any suggestion of bargaining, practically set for trial the question whether the 1906 election revealed a passing wave of feeling, or a genuine fresh start in the country's political development—whether it was only an extreme case of the old "in and out" politics, or an indication of entirely new ideas of control in national affairs. The safe passage of the Trade Disputes Bill through the House of Lords added force to the discussion. Here was a Bill denounced by a considerable portion of the community as a very grave innovation, setting certain people above the law by Act of Parliament; yet the guardians of an established order had passed it. The argument used on behalf of the Lords was that this measure had been so specifically before the country at the election that the electors had only themselves to blame for returning a large majority pledged to the innovation. The Plural Voting Bill, designed to abolish the casting of votes by owners of property in more than one constituency, was thrown out by the Lords, on the ground that reform of the franchise should not be undertaken piecemeal. The net result by the end of the year, in the Liberal belief, was that the House of Lords intended to pursue a policy of rejecting

all the measures it dared to, or so amending them as to destroy their purpose, while passing a few popular or ultra-democratic measures as a set-off.

Heavily though the Tariff Reform party had suffered at the polls, it was far from abandoning its propaganda. Mr Chamberlain had held his city impregnable; Birmingham returned a solid block of Unionists. His general popularity was not what it had been; in some of his campaigning speeches outside his own region—notably at a meeting in Derby—he had been subjected to constant interruption, and had had to curtail his speech. Moreover, when a Unionist party meeting was held at Lansdowne House in February, to profess loyalty to Mr Balfour, who had returned to the House of Commons, as member for the City of London, the official programme on Tariff Reform had become rather colourless. The meeting only pledged itself "by some means or other to procure the lowering of hostile tariffs, and by conference with the Colonies to reach some arrangement for attaining closer commercial union with the Colonies." It was added that "the methods are left open, until the principle is accepted, and the party are asked to abstain from discussing them until that time comes." However much one party might wish to abstain, the other party was not likely to; nor were the carefully non-committal terms of the pledge secure from attack. Free Traders argued stoutly that "some means or other" must in the end imply a preferential or protectionist tariff; and Unionist Free Traders were not placated. They came to the conclusion, after the publication of correspondence between Mr Balfour and Mr Chamberlain, that the two were in substantial agreement, and therefore the formal programme, however worded, must involve the Tariff Reform proposals. One of the first activities of the Liberal Government was to pay attention to the official production of statistics. New distinctions and subdivisions were made in the Board of Trade Returns. Investigations were

set on foot into the relations between wages, hours of work, and cost of living in the United Kingdom and other countries. Most important of all, Mr Lloyd George proposed to hold a census of production at stated intervals ; and, as it seemed that manufacturers might reasonably be chary of their business secrets, a Bill was introduced to make the census compulsory, and to secure that business returns should be as confidential as income-tax returns. The Bill was welcomed by both sides. Liberals were fully alive to the energy that still directed the Tariff Reform propaganda. They did their best to meet the new and exacting requirements of economic discussion by trying to arrive at the real condition of wages, the real meaning of imports and exports, the real balance of British trade. For the ordinary person the year only showed one exciting passage in the Tariff Reform controversy. It became known that, in spite of recent denials, *The Times* was likely to undergo a change of proprietorship, and rumour attributed to Mr C. A. Pearson, who had taken *The Standard* and made it a thorough-going Protectionist organ, a scheme for now acquiring *The Times*, and putting it to the same service. However, when in December the High Court, in an action brought by some of the proprietors of *The Times*, sanctioned the conversion of the proprietorship into a limited liability company, with Mr Walter as governing director, it was known that the new force was to be, not Mr Pearson, nor a syndicate of Free Traders who had also made a bid, but Lord Northcliffe, the chief proprietor of *The Daily Mail*.[1] This was, on the whole, a relief ; for although *The Daily Mail* had, after a slight hesitation, embraced Mr Chamberlain's proposals, it had never shown the " whole hogger " Protectionist bias of Mr Pearson's newspapers. There were, it is true, some other serious considerations. One more step (and a great one,

[1] Sir Alfred Harmsworth's peerage had been one of the honours granted on the resignation of the late Ministry.

in view of the unrivalled position of *The Times*) had been taken in that concentration of newspapers in comparatively few hands which had been proceeding quietly for some time. Both Lord Northcliffe and Mr Pearson controlled or owned outright provincial newspapers in all parts of the country, as well as their London newspapers. The result complained of was that, when any great subject arose in politics, the country had, not a discussion from a number of points of view, largely local and individual, but a parrot-like repetition of dictated opinion. There was, however, less ground for the complaint than the political opponents of those two newspaper-owners imagined. For one thing, provincial newspapers, with the exception of the few great ones which remained independent, *The Manchester Guardian*, *The Yorkshire Post*, *The Scotsman*, *The Glasgow Herald*, and so on, had little or no individual opinion to express on great political subjects; the mass of them followed the London papers so closely that the simultaneous dictation of opinion to them made little difference. For another thing, the idea of newspapers as guides of public opinion had in reality long ceased to be true to facts; they were symbols rather than guides, and men read them to find grounds for their established convictions, or even prejudices, not to find means of arriving at convictions. When Lord Northcliffe entered the field of cheap newspapers he frankly aimed at selling "a good thing," not at supporting causes, which only took their place as part of "a good thing" or otherwise. The one real danger nowadays was the possibility that the dictation of a single opinion to a large number of newspapers in different parts of the country might produce a false impression of the bent of the public mind—might, for instance, produce the same sort of effect as that by which *The Pall Mall Gazette* in 1884 had made itself largely instrumental in the sending of Gordon to Khartoum.[1] But, in point of fact, the con-

[1] See vol. i., p. 124.

centration of newspapers in the hands of certain individuals diminished, rather than increased, the danger of such misapprehension. The process had been now too well observed to leave any uncertainty as to what might be behind those periodical choruses.

Nevertheless, anxiety about the effects of this process was largely responsible for the foundation of a new Liberal newspaper, *The Tribune*, which appeared on the morrow of the general election. It restored Liberalism for a time to a place among the penny newspapers of London,[1] and it began its career with a brilliant staff. It survived only for two years. Its fall was treated by many people as a deplorable proof of the lowering standard of the modern newspaper reader; he had, they said, become accustomed to so little seriousness of purpose in his newspapers that a reasoned presentation of Liberalism failed entirely to impress him. The professional journalist was rather inclined to attribute the fall to other reasons. An even briefer career was the lot of another newspaper founded in this year, with the title of *The Majority*; it was published at a halfpenny, and proposed to be "the organ of all who work for wage or salary." Unfortunately, such people were less a public than a number of publics, each of which responded to a more precise appeal from existing newspapers, and *The Majority* only lived for a week or two.

The one thing which could compete for public attention at the beginning of the year with the Liberal triumph was the launching of the *Dreadnought* in February. There had already been some stimulation of interest, because of the secrecy attending the construction of the ship, and still more because of the amazing fact that she had been laid down in October with the intention of launching her in February and completing her for sea within eighteen months—a feat unprecedented in naval construction. Now that she was launched, it was obvious that she repre-

[1] See p. 88.

sented a startlingly new theory of design, the result of the deliberations of a special committee, whose report had been kept secret. Two main characteristics of the *Dreadnought* marked her off at once from all other battleships. Her immense sides were unbroken by any casemates—any of the recessed or projecting semicircles that had hitherto diversified the outlines of warships; hers were as clean and simple as the sides of an ocean liner. Secondly she was designed to carry only one type of gun, and that a large one—ten 12-inch guns mounted in barbettes; the absence of secondary armament freed her from any necessity for openings in her watertight compartments. Moreover the clearness of her lines would help to give her speed. She was to steam twenty-one knots, against the eighteen and a half which had hitherto been the swiftest pace of a battleship. She marked at the same time an advance in size, displacing 17,900 tons against the 16,500 of the *King Edward the Seventh*. It was well known that consideration of the naval engagements in the Russo-Japanese War—the first time that modern warships had been in action—had largely dictated the new design. Tsu-Shima had been a "heavy-gun" battle; and the purpose in view was to create a battleship capable of inflicting the maximum injury at the maximum distance, while herself offering the least holding ground for the enemy's shells. It was remarked, with gratification, that a line of ten *Dreadnoughts* would be equal in fighting power to twenty *Dominions* or twenty *Agamemnons* (the two latest previous types), and at the same time would be much easier for an admiral to handle. A suitable footnote to the launching of this great ship was provided later in the year by the wonderfully efficient gunnery scores made by the various fleets at gun practice; the percentage of hits to shots had approached eighty; and the presence of Captain Percy Scott at the Admiralty was a guarantee of continued efficiency.

The navy made a less happy appearance in November, when a mutiny occurred at the naval barracks at Devonport among the stokers. Their version of the affair was that an officer, in drilling them, had hectored them in an abusive way, and one phrase he was said to have used, "On the knee, you dogs," had a brief notoriety. The officer was court-martialled, and acquitted of the charge of using abusive language; but he suffered a reprimand for having behaved in such a way as to lead to the rioting. The ringleader of the stokers was sentenced to five years' penal servitude.

It was natural that a good deal of interest should attach itself to the first Labour member of an English Cabinet; and there was much speculation as to how Mr John Burns would bear himself. Some of it was mere gossiping speculation: would he retain his democratic bowler hat, and would he expect to go to Court in a "reefer" suit? He sensibly settled all such talk by adopting Court dress for the occasions when it was necessary, and remaining faithful to the bowler hat on all other occasions. As for more serious speculations about him, he did not leave the country long in doubt that the Local Government Board was to be a watchful and vigorous department, and not one masking administrative slackness by showy legislative schemes. He frankly postponed Poor Law reforms, with which the air was thick, to tightening up local administration. A ruthless hand was needed. In this year two of the London boards of guardians were attacked for corruption and maladministration, the Poplar Board in July, and the West Ham Board in November; and various guardians and officials were brought to trial, chiefly for corrupt practices in connection with the boards' contracts. Mr Burns was indefatigable in personally visiting all sorts of institutions within the Local Government Board's sphere.

The bringing to light of corruption among London

guardians was turned to use by the Moderates of the London County Council in their preparation for the election in the coming spring. This party now called itself the Municipal Reform Party, having found that its old name of "Moderates" conveyed little to the voter, except that the party had the same ideals as the Progressives, but in a less advanced degree. That was in some measure true of the Moderates in the first Council. Since that day of high hopes, the Progressives had moved far and fast; under the attack upon municipal trading they had come to stand for an extreme type of socialism in local government. "Municipal Reform" meant a determination to arrest this kind of socialism; and the criticism of municipal trading had grown strong enough to give the newly named party hopes of a victory next year, and the first expulsion of the Progressives from the helm of London government. Meanwhile, the latter succeeded, after several attempts, in securing parliamentary powers to run trams along the Embankment, and the new service was opened in December, on the same day as the latest "tube" railway, the Great Northern, Piccadilly and Brompton. London traffic problems were changing with extraordinary rapidity; already motor omnibuses were on the main routes, and these and the tubes had solved some of the old difficulties, even if they created new ones.

Business was in a condition to encourage a Free Trade Government to invite the most searching examination of trade statistics. A steady recovery from the lowering effects of the war was providing hopeful figures; the Stock Exchange was cheerful, in spite of the advent of Liberals to power, and the City looked forward to the Budget serenely. When it came, the revenue was a million and a half above the estimate; and Mr Asquith was able to add half-a-million to the provision for meeting National Debt charges, besides restoring the full operation of the Sinking Fund. That he took this line, rather than the line of large

remissions of taxation (the coal-duty was removed, and a penny was taken off the tea-tax), showed intentions sound enough to please the financiers. The most anxious period of the year for the business world was in October, when the failure of the Knickerbocker Trust Company in New York brought about a run on the banks there. A panic followed in Wall Street; one bank after another suspended payment, and for a few days the whole credit system of the United States was in danger. In London, besides the inevitable disturbance of the stock markets by the failures and the uncertainty, there was the "pinching" effect of the heavy call for gold from the United States. The treasury of that country ordered an immediate coinage of three millions sterling in gold, but fifteen millions had also to be drawn from London. The Bank Rate rose at once, and went as high as 7 per cent.; at that figure the influx of gold was sufficient to meet the strain, and, though the depressing effects of the panic lasted for some time, the English markets came very well out of the trouble. The most interesting operation in England at the moment was an amalgamation of some of the largest soap manufacturing companies. It attained more than a stock market notoriety, because it was violently attacked by certain newspapers as the beginning of a monopolist trust which would capture the retail trade, and prevent honest competition in either price or quality of soap. These newspapers worked up their indignation on behalf of the poor washerwoman, and other such members of the community not often within the purview of the editors concerned. When the indignation reached the point of accusing Messrs Lever Brothers of selling short weight, the latter entered a libel action, which ended in the following year in an agreed verdict of £50,000 damages and costs. Another important trade matter of the year was the meeting in England of the International Federation of Master Cotton Spinners' and Manufacturers'

Associations. It marked the foundation of a system of collecting and publishing cotton trade statistics from all over the world, which added one more improvement to the already high organisation of the trade. The establishment of the new system was largely due to the energy and patience of Mr Charles Macara.

The new Government naturally had to receive a great many deputations from people anxious to enlarge or to accelerate, or sometimes to retard, its programme of legislation. Liberal and Labour members were urgent for the production of a scheme of Old Age Pensions; women suffragists for extension of the franchise to women; licensed victuallers for some information as to the Ministry's intentions on the licensing question. An important deputation waited on Sir Edward Grey from the Congo Reform Association. The sitting of the commission in Brussels had resulted in a scheme of reform which was regarded as wholly inadequate; the King of the Belgians was apparently impenitent to the last degree in the matter of the Crown Domain of the Congo, as to which he refused to acknowledge any right of interference by the Powers, although it was said to be "the worst of the Chartered Company excrescences" on the original purpose of the Powers. Mr Morel, indefatigable as ever, was roundly attacking one of these companies, the Kasai Company; and the appalling evidence he produced, and upheld undauntedly against the most persistent vilification of his objects and his methods, was at last beginning to receive serious attention in England.

The Woman Suffrage deputation to the Prime Minister, which took place in May, gave small indication of the extraordinary complexity which this question was shortly to assume. The Prime Minister in his reply, while assuring the deputation of his personal sympathy with their cause, declined to promise a Bill, remarking that no party was as yet united on the question. This, no doubt, was true;

and it was also true that, as compared with other business on the Government's crowded—and overcrowded—programme, woman suffrage could not be said as yet to have much interested the country and the electors at large. The Woman Suffrage Bills that had appeared fairly regularly in the House of Commons had provided light-hearted debates on private members' days; and although the subject had come up in the official programme at the election, and as many as 420 members of the new House were said to have professed allegiance to the ideal, no one expected it to become a burning subject immediately. That it did so was due to an organisation called the Women's Social and Political Union, hitherto a comparatively small body of women suffragists recruited chiefly from the manufacturing towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire. Dissatisfied with the small progress made by the older Woman Suffrage societies, with their appeal chiefly to the highly educated from highly educated women, the new body based itself rather on the working woman's necessity for a vote, to improve her industrial position and her domestic rights. The union had been active in Manchester during the election, and it now entered upon a sensational career in London. It organised a procession of women and a demonstration in Trafalgar Square, in connection with the deputation to the Prime Minister; it made itself conspicuous in the Ladies' Gallery at the House of Commons during a debate on a Woman Suffrage resolution brought forward by Mr Keir Hardie; and some of its leading members paid organised calls on ministers. Finally, in October, the union began the policy of sending large bodies of women to the central lobby of the Houses of Parliament to interview ministers; in October, November and December several women were arrested for riotous behaviour, and, refusing to pay fines, were sent to prison.

The general public took as yet but a casual interest in

these proceedings. Recovering from its absorption in the sporting excitements of the election, it went its ways. Skating on artificial ice at Prince's Club was the new amusement of the rich, who now diversified their habits of speech by tacking a meaningless "What?" on to the end of remarks which called for no answer. Less exalted people were provided with a new craze in the watching of wrestling bouts, with immense champions struggling on exiguous mats; and the emancipation of the middle classes began to display itself in a revolt against the wearing of top hats in city businesses, and against the wearing of any hats in hours of holiday or relaxation. Indeed, in every direction men were affronting traditions of dress. The frock coat had ceased to be the smartest thing to wear; the well-dressed young man affected elegant forms of what the tailors call a "morning coat." The curious point for the social observer was that this new fashion was actually a revolt against Court etiquette. King Edward held to it that the frock coat was the garment for formal occasions; the exquisites of White's and the Bachelors' "regretted" that they could no longer recognise Court dignitaries in the street, since the latter had to continue wearing frock coats. Nay, more; it was no longer impossible to be seen in Pall Mall or St James's Street of an afternoon in a jacket and bowler hat, or straw hat. Partly this subversive change could be traced to a good cause. The young men of the Guards and other smart regiments were said nowadays to be so keen on their profession that they were constantly at Aldershot or Pirbright, and, running up thence to town, naturally came West in "out of town" clothes. The more general cause, however, was a happy inclination to reconsider most traditional habits, and, if any were found exacting, to drop them.

In December the Transvaal received its Constitution, and entered upon self-government and the full status of

a responsible colony. There had been no little anxiety in some quarters with regard to this step, which was looked upon as a piece of Liberal quixotism. Only four years had passed since the two races in the Transvaal had been at war; was it possible that already the country could safely be left to their joint direction? As far at least as immediately appeared, the bold experiment was not ill-advised; the mining market showed, not only absence of uneasiness, but a slight improvement.

In the last days of the year Lady Burdett-Coutts died. She had controlled an immense fortune with dignity and thoughtfulness; and her burial in the Abbey was a testimony, not merely to her generous philanthropy, but to the honourable simplicity with which she had maintained a difficult position. Miss Dorothea Beale, who died in November, had also done much to exalt her sex. Founder and headmistress of the Cheltenham Ladies' College, it was her special achievement to have broken down the convention of the private governess in the education of upper-class girls, and, by so doing, to have opened wide realms of knowledge to a class that before this time had been inefficiently taught.

CHAPTER XIII

1907 : PAGEANTRY, SUFFRAGETTES AND THE DRUCE CASE

THE year 1907 was marked by a certain, and rather strange, lull in politics. A new Government pledged up to the eyes to legislative activities had hardly been expected to make its second year of office a quiet one. Various influences were at work. The Prime Minister was not in good health. His wife, to whom he was devoted, had been stricken with a long illness in the previous year, and he had constantly gone from a night's work at the House of Commons to her sick-bed. This strain, ending in the grief of her death, had gravely affected his strength. Again, ministers were nearly all over-pressed in their departments. The work of Government offices was said to have fallen grievously into arrear during the declining years of the late Government. It happened also that the principal measure of the session was Mr Haldane's Army Bill, and this excited only a very small section of the public outside the service and the Houses of Parliament.

Roving attention on the look-out for interests was caught before the year was many days old. A most destructive earthquake in Jamaica, whereby the town of Kingston was practically thrown into ruins, happened to strike home to the Englishman. Sir Alfred Jones, the head of the steamship line trading to Jamaica, had just conveyed thither in one of his ships a distinguished party of persons whose interest he wished to enlist. Consequently there were a good many anxious families in England when news of the earthquake arrived. One of the travellers, Sir James Fergusson, a former member of Parliament for Manchester,

and at one time an under-secretary in a Unionist Government, had been killed. An incident of the succeeding days of relief work was curious. Some ships of the United States navy were ordered to Kingston to render assistance. Friction arose from a difference of ideas as to how the work should be effected, and from what the English people felt to be a too great inclination on the part of the Americans to show off their efficiency, and to accuse the Englishmen of having none. England had, as we have seen, wearied of the doctrine of efficiency in the persons of her own colonists ; in the case of Americans she roundly dubbed it fussiness, and the American ships were withdrawn in some dudgeon.

Hardly had the excitement of these events passed off, when a murder case with some unusual elements provided matter for discussion. Mr Whiteley, the head of the great stores that bore his name, and the first man to introduce English people to such stores, was shot dead in his office by a young man who claimed to be his natural son. This allegation, while it was of less account in England than it might have been in France, where extenuating causes were more easily made to include moral questions, nevertheless was widely debated by the public. The young man was sentenced to death, but the sentence was commuted to one of penal servitude for life.

He had the distinction of facing the first murder trial in the new Central Criminal Court which the King opened on 27th February. Newgate Prison had disappeared. Its grim yards and corridors and cells—peculiarly grim because for many years the prison had been only a place of execution—had been opened to trampling crowds at the heels of an auctioneer ; and doors and window bars and gates had been bought as curiosities by showmen. On the old site had arisen a very different building ; the heavy grey walls, which could never have been mistaken for anything but a gaol, had given place to façades that

might appertain to any sort of public service. Inside the building, court-rooms cheerful with green leather and light unpolished oak panelling and frescoed staircases now replaced the dusty Old Bailey courts, in which the huge size of the dock had been eloquent of days when batches of men were hanged for petty felonies, and where the reek of a poisonous past seemed to exude from the walls.

Early in the year it became evident that the leaders of the new agitation for woman suffrage had discovered how to attract the notice of crowds. On the evening of the day after the session opened, and again a month later, when a Woman Suffrage Bill introduced by Mr W. H. Dickinson had been talked out, the Women's Social and Political Union organised large processions to the House of Commons. These were developments from the smaller affairs of the previous year, the object now being to force the police to arrest women in considerable numbers, with the view of producing an embarrassment for the authorities. Sixty-five women were arrested on the first occasion, and seventy-six on the second ; and all of them refused to pay fines, and had to be committed to prison. The crowds that watched the scenes in Parliament Square were for the most part of a rough or careless type, only there as spectators of struggles of women and policemen. But certainly one result of the notoriety attained by these methods was that suffragist speakers at meetings up and down the country were able to gather audiences which even a year before they could never have mustered. The Women's Social and Political Union prided itself on bringing as much new life into the propagandist side of the work as it had brought into the direct demand upon the Government. None the less, the union was associated in the minds of ordinary persons less with meetings than with public agitation. The older bodies of suffragists, not at all convinced that their object was really furthered by notoriety, were inclined to distinguish themselves from the new body ;

and the attachment of a popular label, "The Suffragettes," to the latter helped the distinction. What chiefly marked the suffragettes' position was persistence in countering or over-riding all the stock political objections to the urgency of their case. They maintained unflinchingly the attitude that woman suffrage was not a question which ought to be subject to the normal course of political questions; it ought not to depend on the state of opinion in the Cabinet, on the state of business in the House, or on the pledges of members to their constituents. They presented it simply as a demand; and treated lack of response to the demand as hostility to it. The subject had not been mentioned in the King's Speech. No one imagined it would be, but the suffragettes took the fact as a form of refusal. Mr Dickinson's Bill did not satisfy all in the House who supported woman suffrage, and in any case a private member's Bill could not, by any normal political canons, bring about a change so vast. Yet the talking out of the Bill was again treated as a refusal. The suffragettes decided to work in the constituencies against every Liberal candidate, whether he were personally a suffragist or not, so long as the Liberal Government did not produce a Woman Suffrage Bill. They had clever and energetic speakers, who entered with zest into street-corner meetings, faithful to the union's original reliance upon the working woman, and they added immensely to the vigour and interest of by-election campaigns. During the year it became plain that an extraordinarily baffling situation could be brought about by the uncompromising position the suffragettes had adopted.

A vacancy occurred during the spring in the representation of Wimbledon. Mr Chaplin became the Unionist candidate, and the Liberal candidate, Mr Bertrand Russell, put Woman Suffrage in the forefront of his programme. This may in itself have been the step forward which suffragists considered it to be; but the result

showed that as an appeal to the electorate it was not very effective. Mr Russell was beaten by nearly 7000. Mr Chaplin was an avowed anti-suffragist. Parliament passed in this year the Bill qualifying women to serve on county and borough councils. Many people had been disappointed when the test case brought after the first London County Council election in 1889 exposed the fact that women could not legally be elected; and the Bill now establishing their right to sit was generally welcomed.

At the beginning of the session there was not much sign of the comparative lack of legislative work which has been mentioned. The King's Speech referred to the differences which had arisen between the two Houses, but did no more than record the fact. The programme laid before Parliament included Licensing Reform, an Army Bill, and a Criminal Appeal Bill, besides the Women's Bill just mentioned. To this list were added a Bill to set up councils in Ireland with some power of legislation —an attempt at a new form of Home Rule, based largely on the "devolution" ideas, and owing, in fact, much to Sir Antony Macdonnell; an Education Bill, being a fresh effort to settle the vexed question by agreement; a Land Valuation Bill; and certain Small Holdings Bills. But the licensing question was postponed. The terms of educational settlement proposed by Mr McKenna, who had succeeded Mr Birrell at the Board of Education, did not commend themselves to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Government dropped that Bill. The Irish Councils Bill was also dropped. It was in charge of Mr Birrell, who, on the appointment in the previous December of Mr Bryce to be ambassador in Washington, had left the Education Office, in some disappointment at the loss of the Bill which had cost him so much labour, and had undertaken the Irish Chief Secretaryship. He was not now more fortunate, except that he wasted less labour.

The new proposal for Ireland was far removed from Home Rule. It made no difference to Irish representation at Westminster; it stipulated what the new bodies should be competent to deal with, instead of merely what they should not; it set up no new Irish executive. It was, in fact, a measure which might almost have been within the contemplation of Mr Wyndham two years previously. At the same time, it was the nearest to Home Rule that the present Cabinet and Parliament could venture after the statements at the election of Sir Edward Grey and Mr Asquith. At first the measure seemed to be a success; it was not refused point-blank by the Irish Nationalists. But a convention in Dublin in the spring settled its fate; the party returned to the full Home Rule demand, and the Bill was dropped.

The Army Bill was chiefly remarkable to the general public for its reorganisation of the auxiliary forces. It proposed to throw the militia, the yeomanry, and the volunteers into a single arm, to be called the Territorial Force. This was to take a definite place in national defence, with more effective training and a closer relation to the regular army. Recruiting was to be assisted, and the drain of camps and equipment on the private purses of officers and men to be lightened, by placing the Territorial Forces under county associations, presided over by the lords lieutenant, who were thus restored to a long-lost position of military authority. Strong objections were raised to the inclusion of the militia in the new force; and in the end Mr Haldane gave way on that proposal. The assigning to the volunteers of a definite place in our lines of defence, the assurance thereby given of more generous consideration of their needs and more serious attention to their training on the part of the War Office, gave real encouragement to the men. Those who had ceased to believe in the efficacy of voluntary service, and were agitating for compulsory service, were not

converted; they laughed to scorn Mr Haldane's contention that, with the new training, the Territorial Force could at any time, with six months' hard continuous work, fit itself to take the place of the regular army, in the event of a war drawing off the whole of the latter. Critics remarked that in such a war we could hardly arrange for a peaceful six months to practise our territorials. It was also said that the force could never be worked up to the establishment projected for it. But the immediate effect was undoubtedly to give the volunteers fresh vitality, and in spite of the grumbles the new scheme started well. Later in the year the King summoned the lords lieutenant to Buckingham Palace, and commended the scheme to their patriotic energies.

On the whole the year's work was not very Radical; and indeed the Opposition began to pluck up heart. Mr Balfour was leading them again with some spirit. He had been curiously ineffective in the first session of the new Parliament; and nothing could have shown more clearly the truth of the belief that the Parliament stood for a great change. His skill in debate was for a time completely lost upon a House that regarded his airiness and his light-handed dexterity with an amazed impatience. It had slowly learned the power that lay behind the lightness; and although Liberals felt, with a growing resentment, that the true opposition to their purposes was not in the House of Commons at all, they came to regard Mr Balfour's leadership as a reality. The apparent failure of the Government to keep up the pace of its programme, the postponing or dropping of various measures, gave the Opposition some opening; and they took full advantage of it. The most Radical work of the session was to be found in the Budget, when Mr Asquith introduced into the system of taxation a distinction between earned and unearned incomes, and laid a super-tax, in addition to increased death-duties, on estates of

over a million pounds. On earned incomes the income-tax was reduced to ninepence, while on unearned incomes it remained at a shilling. In conjunction with the concession, income-tax surveyors were empowered to examine the salary-books of firms, a check upon evasions of the tax which were believed to be becoming serious and habitual. Out of his surplus, Mr Asquith allotted a million and a half to reducing the National Debt. By his energetic restoration of the sinking fund, and by allocations of his surpluses, he had in these two years taken some twenty-six millions off the debt.

Lapse of time since the general election inevitably tended to weaken the impression of that event as a national awakening. There was a disinclination on the part of the public to face in any large way the problem of the House of Lords, or to formulate a struggle between the electorate and the hereditary legislators. London, as if to balance its unusual return of Liberals to Parliament, turned the Progressives out of office at the County Council election, and gave a large majority to the Municipal Reformers. The International Horse Show in the summer, with the ring turned at vast expense into a bowery garden, and millionaires' horses stabled in luxury like that of the famous horse of Caligula, was a thoroughly popular affair, and roused no democratic ire. Opportunities occurred for disgruntled Tories to maintain the view that the result of the general election had its root, not in deep political conviction, but in mere caprice, and a disregard of tradition and authority, which was in many ways deplorable, and in some dangerous. The outbreak of " living statuary " exhibitions at music halls ; the turning of country-house parties into reckless " rags," with young men and women pillow-fighting in corridors, or squirting soda-water siphons at one another ; a cheerful irresponsible interest in crime, which laughed at the impudence of the theft of the Gold Cup from Ascot

racecourse, and enjoyed the wildest gossip about the far more mysterious and unpleasant loss of the regalia of the Order of St Patrick from Dublin Castle in July; even such a break with tradition as the fact that the notable recipients of degrees at the Oxford Encænia were popular idols like Mark Twain, Rudyard Kipling, and General Booth—these were regarded as instances of the deplorable side of the change. The dangerous side was discerned in the introduction of Radical feeling into our control of Egypt and India. There was a fear lest expectations aroused among the Nationalists of those countries by the overwhelming return of a Liberal Government should be precipitated into open revolt. India, indeed, was already disturbed; rioting took place in Calcutta in September, and a visit paid by Mr Keir Hardie about that time was deeply resented by the authorities. Lord Cromer, resigning in April the post in Egypt which he had held for nearly twenty-five difficult years, and returning to England in May, spoke with bitterness of the delivery of speeches by "irresponsible politicians" rousing unrest among Eastern peoples under our control. There was certainly on the Ministerial side a group of members who did not hesitate to affirm that both in India and in Egypt a Liberal Ministry ought to be taking steps towards establishing self-government, and withdrawing from a control which was "of little profit" to "the democracy" either in those countries or in England. Lord Cromer himself had fallen under special attack in 1906. A riot had occurred in a village in Egypt to which some English officers had gone for pigeon-shooting; one of the officers had died of injuries inflicted by the natives. For this four villagers were hanged, and eighteen others sentenced to various periods of penal servitude (two for life) and to flogging. It was argued that British officers had no right to go shooting in places where their presence was likely to cause such outbreaks, and that in

any case the vengeance exacted had been outrageously severe. If such measures were necessary for upholding British prestige, then our presence in the country was unjustifiable. It was inevitable that the new Parliament should display a good deal of hostility to the traditional structure of our position both in India and in Egypt. It was a structure with which the aristocracy and the upper middle class chiefly had been concerned; and members who felt their support to lie in other ranks of the community were not disposed to pass over in silence the activities of administrations based on conditions of an earlier day. The mistake of such members was to suppose that the British voter had any real knowledge of, or concern for, the affairs of our dependencies. The interest in them still remained an aristocratic and upper middle-class interest; and spasmodic newspaper intelligence concerning India and Egypt, or even concerning the colonies, did nothing to create real opinion.

In the sphere of foreign politics there did appear to be some change of the national habit. Since the *entente cordiale* had caught popular fancy, there had been an impulse to make our foreign relations depend less upon the exchanges of diplomacy than upon mutual acquaintance. The municipalities of capital and provincial towns visited one another, and these visits were interchanged not only between France and England, but also between Germany and England. A party of British journalists went to Germany in May, were received by the Emperor at Potsdam, and were fêted in all the principal towns. The Lord Mayor and Corporation of London were the guests of the Municipality of Berlin in June. This new faith in the efficacy of a spirit less formal than that of diplomacy was largely due, of course, to the conviction that we owed our friendliness with France to the personal popularity of King Edward in Paris, and his own liking for the French. It was, in its way, a more striking

example of the working of new ideas in national life than the general election had been, and even more hopeful from the Radical point of view. If the ordinary Englishman could feel that our relations with foreign countries depended on himself, a new era of peace and commonsense might be dawning. Yet the movement became in this very year unexpectedly complex. Russia began to be drawn into our range of agreements. When the King was at Marienbad in the summer, for his accustomed "cure," he entertained the Russian Foreign Minister at lunch; and a few weeks later an Anglo-Russian agreement, embodying terms of settled policy in regard to the relations between the two countries at certain long-vexed points of contact in Asia, was published. Now Radicals, if they were to encourage a popular interest in international affairs, were not going to let it be blindfolded, and they considered it to be a mockery of the democratic spirit to invoke its friendly inclinations on behalf of a tyrannical government. In the previous year a violent repression of revolution in Moscow had been succeeded by the summoning of the first attempt in Russia at a popularly elected assembly. The Duma, as this assembly was called, had shown considerable spirit; it had demanded an amnesty for all political prisoners, the establishment of constitutional monarchy and the concession to itself of the right to initiate legislation. The Russian executive, not at all inclined to move at this speed, thwarted all these proposals, and the Duma was dissolved by the Tsar after ten weeks' existence. It happened at that moment that the Inter-Parliamentary Union was meeting in England, and representatives from this youngest parliament had been welcomed enthusiastically. When the news came of the abrupt end of its career, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, speaking at a luncheon in honour of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, used the words: "La Douma est morte; vive la Douma!" Radicals could not embrace

the prospect of a closer relation with the government which had treated so summarily the hopes of a new regime; and they began to wonder if the appearance of fresh influences in international affairs had not been a little illusory.

The summer of 1907 was the great Pageant summer. In 1905 the ancient little town of Sherborne in Dorset had felt impelled, largely by the fortunate fact of its having a claim upon the interest of a popular playwright—Mr Louis Parker—to celebrate its antiquity by an open-air dramatic representation of notable events in its history. These performances were a great success, and the town had found so much amusement in mustering its performers, dressing them, and beholding Saxons and Danes, Plantagenets, Tudors, Cavaliers and Puritans walking its streets, that other towns were filled with emulation. Writers were not wanting to construct episodes; persons with some experience of the stage were ready to drill the performers; few towns of importance were without a Saxon battle, or a charter from some Plantagenet king, a visit from Queen Elizabeth, or an association with the Civil War; and few towns, too, lacked inhabitants with leisure enough to enjoy the mild fuss of committee work and organisation. Oxford, St Alban's, the Isle of Wight, Warwick, Coventry, Bury St Edmunds, Liverpool set up wooden structures in fields or parks, and inhabitants going about their daily affairs would be confronted with knights in armour; ladies in gay colours, farthingales and ruffs; rude bowmen and long-haired Saxons. The fashion lasted into the two following summers, but with declining energy. It produced no really new or vital form of art; the books of pageants were mere skeletons; the episodes were monotonously similar in different towns, consisting almost always of battles, royal visits and other occurrences, which were local merely in the sense of having happened on the spot, and not at all in representing

local character or atmosphere. At Oxford a Masque of Learning, interposed into the succession of episodes, afforded a glimpse of better things; it depended for its effect upon ideas, as the old morality plays did. But it was the only attempt of the kind, and the Pageant movement died away without having called into being either a local art or a feeling for local history. It had been a mere excursion into amateur open-air performances of conventional stage notions.

On the stage itself, however, new ideas seemed to be gathering strength. At the Royal Court Theatre Mr Granville Barker, in conjunction with Mr Vedrenne, had for some time been boldly producing plays which four or five years earlier would have appeared only at the Stage Society. There now existed a public for the drama of ideas, of social problems, of class foibles, and even of national foibles; and in 1907 the Vedrenne-Barker management moved to a larger and more central theatre, the Savoy. New methods of acting were as characteristic of the management as a new standard of plays; unfortunately the larger size of the Savoy seemed to militate against the subtlety of the acting, and the venture lost some of its earlier success. One of the interesting results of the Vedrenne-Barker management was that it provided a rallying-point for dramatists who were trying to break new ground. Mr Bernard Shaw had by this time attained a popular success; and he had been the main support of the Court Theatre. Mr John Galsworthy, Mr St John Hankin, Mr John Masefield and Mr Granville Barker were the other notable figures of the group. An immediate consequence of the attempt to produce plays challenging the conventional judgments of society was increased resentment against the autocratic operation of the Lord Chamberlain's power of censorship over the London stage. An agitation was now set on foot which led to the appointment in 1909 of a select committee.

Outside London, the most interesting theatrical developments were the great success of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, where the work of a group of Irish dramatists—among whom Lady Gregory, Mr W. B. Yeats and Mr J. M. Synge were prominent—was played by a company of actors more homogeneous than London, under the sway of the " star " actor or actress, ever produced; and the establishment about this time of a Repertory Theatre in Manchester, which soon made its name for courage in the production of plays, and success in acting them. But interest in the drama still remained the mark of a rather limited section of the public.

In literature change and development were far more free. Of the older novelists two, who had had for long to be content with the devotion of the few, began to find their way to a wider recognition. The appointment of Mr George Meredith to the Order of Merit in 1905 made his admirers rejoice that there was, in this order, a personal distinction which he could accept with dignity; as people had previously rejoiced in its bestowal upon Mr John Morley.[1] Mr Henry James saw his art by now more widely appreciated and understood. Fame had been reached at a bound by Mr William De Morgan, more slowly by Mr Arnold Bennett, both of them writers in the true succession of the romantic English novel. Mr De Morgan, bringing the experience of a long life and an extraordinary human sympathy to bear upon the waywardness of his fellow-men, touched the feelings of a generation which (if sometimes only from slackness) was on the whole more genial and kindly than its predecessors. Mr Arnold Bennett, keenly alive to the swiftness with which traditions were being undermined, gave preservation to lower middle-class types of a period incredibly

[1] The Order of Merit had been established by King Edward in 1902, largely with the intention of honouring those to whom the traditional honours could not be acceptable.

close at hand in mere date. A mind as keenly, and more nervously, aware of change was that of Mr H. G. Wells. Having first found his public, in the days of the worship of science and invention, with novels that prolonged to most entertaining distances the avenues of possibility opened by the scientist, he had reacted immediately to the cry for efficiency. An early member of the Fabian Society, and imbued with the methods of the laboratory, he had thus two lines of intellectual response to that cry; and he began to throw into the form of fiction, more and more characterised by wide sweeps of social analysis, his vision of the wastefulness and inefficiency of domestic, civic and political life. Curiously enough, as the novelists grew more searching, taste in literature became wider in its scope. Novels had to compete in the higher social ranks with volumes of memoirs and letters, which were often more entertaining in a society which had known the personalities appearing in such books, or knew their descendants. Less exalted people turned again to the essay, which had had little vogue since the death of Stevenson; Mr Belloc, Mr E. V. Lucas, and Mr Max Beerbohm brought light hands to the practice of this art; and Mr A. C. Benson occupied something like a popular pulpit. With the taste for memoirs went a taste also for history within reach of our own day; Lord Rosebery's *Napoleon, The Last Phase*, and Mr George Trevelyan's works on the campaigns of Garibaldi largely formed this taste.

For some time past, women had taken an increasingly high position among English writers of novels; more than one of the most prominent, such as Miss Robbins and Miss May Sinclair, were by now also responding to political developments in virtually restricting themselves to Feminist topics.

In the autumn various stout efforts were made to convince the world that navigable balloons were to be

our means of commanding the air. The achievements of M. Santos-Dumont have already been referred to.[1] The French Government had an airship, *La Patrie*; the German Government was supporting Count Zeppelin's experiments with enormous dirigibles, of which the gas-chambers were constructed from rigid materials, instead of from silk reinforced by rigid frames; and the British army had an airship, the *Nulli Secundus*, on which great hopes were centred. When it sailed up from Aldershot to the Crystal Palace there was much excitement. But it was unable to make its way back against the wind, and was anchored in the Crystal Palace grounds. There it justified those who maintained that the vast unwieldiness of the "lighter-than-air" structure must always prevent it from becoming really effective. A storm came on, and the *Nulli Secundus* was ignominiously wrecked at its moorings.

A labour movement which arose in the late summer concentrated sharply all the alarm which the Government's great majority had provoked among persons of property. For some weeks a prospect of a general strike threatened the railway system of the country. Railway employees were dissatisfied with their position, and the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants was making representations to the directors of various companies. The directors now took the line of refusing to recognise the right of the society to general representation of railway men, and said that complaints would only be heard by each company from its own men. In minor ways this question of the "recognition" of trade unions had often been raised before. In some important cases, such as the cotton trade, it had never been fought as a principle; in others, such as the mining industry, it had been settled years ago. It was, perhaps, unfortunate that in the case of railways the question should have been left open until

[1] See p. 139.

a time when it appeared to many people to be an ostentatious exploiting by labour of a Government placed in power largely by a working-class vote. The railway directors pointed out that the Amalgamated Society only included one-fifth or one-sixth of the railway employees of the country, and therefore could not properly even raise the question of corporate representation. This implied almost as profound a disturbance of the practice of trade combination as the Taff Vale decision had made. If a union was to measure its responsibility solely by the proportion of its membership to the number of persons in the industry the work of a good many years would be largely lost. The society threatened a general railway strike, and for some weeks the position was full of anxiety. Mr Lloyd George intervened on behalf of the Board of Trade; and when, after long negotiations, he succeeded in the peaceful establishment of a system of conciliation and arbitration, there was so great a relief that a certain tendency to regard him as a hot-headed demagogue underwent modification. He was credited with possessing more genuine gifts of administration than his opponents had supposed. The settlement to which the two sides agreed under his guidance consisted in the division of railway employees into groups; the creation on each railway system of a conciliation board for each group, composed of representatives of the masters and of the men; and the appointment for each railway of a central board, with an independent chairman, on the principle of the Coal Conciliation Board. The chairman would have the power of making awards.

The opening in June of one more tube railway—from Charing Cross to Hampstead and Highgate—completed this new network of London communications. The circle of the old Underground Railway had been cut, first lengthwise by the Central London Railway, and now from north to south by the City & South London Tube on the east, the Highgate & Hampstead line in the middle, and the

Bakerloo & Piccadilly tubes on the west. Some curious results followed. Brompton, for instance, had become a more convenient place of residence than parts of Westminster; Chelsea Embankment was practically farther away than Hampstead. New suburbs began to arise in Hampstead, and the Garden City Movement could profitably set itself to work there. The more distant suburbs reached from Waterloo and Charing Cross had fresh means of pouring inhabitants into all parts of working London; and the problem of the dreariness of Clapham or Stockwell lodgings for clerks, which at one time had begun to lead in the direction of hostels for young men, ceased to be important. Clerks could now lodge within reach of tennis and cricket and football. The capacity for "having a good time" had taken one more turn, and opened itself to more people.

The end of the year saw also the end of a fantastic case, in which the public had from time to time found amusement. The fifth Duke of Portland, who died in 1879, had been notoriously eccentric. He had been given to disappearing for weeks; he had avoided the sight of his fellows, and built himself strange underground rooms and passages in his great park at Welbeck. Hence, when a story arose that a certain Thomas Charles Druce, the head of a furniture business in London, had really been this duke—that the Duke, when he disappeared, was really carrying on a second existence as Mr Druce—the wild romance obtained no little credulity. It became after a time a more serious affair, since the representatives of Mr Druce based upon it a claim to the Portland estates. They alleged that the coffin supposed to contain the remains of Mr Druce contained nobody at all, but that the Duke, in order to put an end to a double life which at last embarrassed him, had caused a mock funeral to take place. For some years this story was no more than a pastime to the public, and Mrs Druce's various applications to the law were regarded as

the fruits of delusion. But in 1907 she brought forward evidence of a more definite kind; her witnesses were a man who alleged that he had attended the Duke, and had known him also in his Druce impersonation, and a woman who professed to tell the story of the empty coffin. Mrs Druce's case had become a joint-stock affair; people invested money in it as a speculation, to be repaid with interest in the event of her success. The production of these witnesses brought matters to a head. There had always been assertions that the individuals in possession of the Portland estates had contrived to burke inquiry; but there was no difficulty of that kind now. The only hesitation of the authorities arose from the fact that the whole story was so notoriously fantastic that to make any concession to it might seem undignified. On 27th December the chancellor of the diocese of London issued a faculty for opening the grave of T. C. Druce in Highgate Cemetery. Early one winter's day the work was done in the presence of accredited witnesses; the coffin was found to contain the body of an aged and bearded man, " unmistakably " the Thomas Druce who was said to have been a fiction. Except for some necessary perjury proceedings against the two sensational witnesses, this closed the romance.

CHAPTER XIV

1908 : THE LICENSING BILL AND FLYING MACHINES

THE year 1908 was the year in which the world first saw men flying. For some time it had been well known by those who had more than common knowledge of aeronautical invention that the "heavier than air" principle had been making great strides. The gliding experiments of Lilienthal and Pilcher had given such assurance to mathematical calculations of the behaviour of plane surfaces in air that the advent of very light motors had almost immediately turned gliding into flying. Vague reports arrived at intervals from the United States of experiments which were being conducted in secrecy at Dayton, Ohio, by two brothers named Wright. The general public was rather sceptical, and inclined to scoff at these rumours of flying men. Having no idea of the behaviour of plane surfaces in air, it imagined that tremendous lifting apparatus—heavy lifting propellers —would be absolutely necessary. So far as the public had seen any aeroplane inventions, it had acquired little respect for them; it had witnessed small models at the Alexandra Palace flying about as well as superior paper darts. Mr S. F. Cody, with his large apparatus rather like a vast combination of box-kites, had no engine powerful enough to produce by traction the pressure required to lift the affair. The best brains of motor engineers were not in England, but in France; and the engine-makers naturally preferred to conduct their experiments in that country. It was France that now first witnessed a man flying in public. On 13th January M. Farman,

a Frenchman, but the son of an English newspaper correspondent in Paris, leapt into fame by winning the Deutsch-Archdeacon prize of £2000 for a circular flight in a machine heavier than air. Broadly speaking, there had as yet been no other type of machine than the one he used; therefore to speak of it as a biplane is an anachronism; but for purposes of description the name may be allowed.

Frequently after his prize flight M. Farman was seen in the air; and when it was announced in September that Mr Wilbur Wright also had flown, covering a distance of thirty miles in forty minutes, it was a natural conclusion that mechanical flight would now develop very rapidly. If the Wrights had been brought out of their long seclusion by M. Farman's sudden success, and had triumphantly flown, then the problem was solved, and the world had only to await swift developments. Nevertheless unbelievers were not at once converted. Flights as yet had only taken place in calm weather; the Farman and Wright biplanes, though much less cumbrous than Mr Cody's evolution of the box-kite, were still very large things, and considered as lifting agents for a single human being were unwieldy and disproportionate. Moreover they rose but slowly from the ground, and required an apparatus of running rails, with weights and pulleys on uprights, to give them the initial impulse.[1] It was still easy, even if rash, for sceptics to express the conviction that flying could not be more than a cumbrous performance of short distances by single individuals. But enough had

[1] A curious example of the slowness of even brilliantly quick imaginations to distinguish between the essential and unessential elements in these first experiments may be seen in Mr Kipling's *With the Night Mail*, published this year. Professing to forecast the state of mechanical flight in A.D. 2008, it includes among advertisements of "crack" aeroplane makers, sets of running rails for starting. Such things had passed entirely out of use within twelve months of these first flights.

been done already to cause the experiments at Farnborough, first made notable by the patience and admirable self-confidence of Mr Cody, to be infused with new life. A biplane of the Farman type was secured. Men with real knowledge of engineering refused to see limits to possibilities now that engines of the kind used on these machines had been put together, and driven with success. The navigable balloon was not abandoned ; its power of lifting a number of persons remained a strong advantage over the aeroplane, and *Zeppelin No.* 4 in June made a flight with fifteen passengers on board, behaving well against the wind. But she was wrecked in August, and her achievements did not for a moment turn men's minds from the aeroplane. The latter was far less costly than an airship, could be much more easily housed, and even at this early stage was more to be trusted against a wind. Experiments with airships continued for some years ; but the enormous bulk of their gas-envelopes, combined with the fact that, being lighter than air, they were extremely difficult to control at anchor, rendered them possessions beset with anxiety.

The assassination of the King and the Crown Prince of Portugal in the streets of Lisbon on 1st February was received with sorrow in England. King Edward was known to have a particular liking for King Carlos. One sequel to the event has importance for the observer of English manners and customs. King Edward and Queen Alexandra attended not only a memorial service at St Paul's, but a Requiem Mass at the Roman Catholic Church of St James's, Spanish Place. There was still, as we have seen in the matter of the Accession Declaration, a body of opinion in this country which regarded Rome as the Scarlet Woman ; but that King Edward should be able to attend a Requiem Mass showed a considerable advance in national common-sense and national respect for the sovereign. He was extraordinarily careful of public

opinion, and not at all the man to affront it in such a connection, however strong his own wishes might be. There were some who managed to regard the incident as one more sign of the general loosening of ties of authority; the bulk of the people, they said, sat so loosely to religious observances that it had ceased to matter what kind of service the King attended. It was at least equally true that a great part of the nation had infused a new life into their religion. If going to church had ceased among people of education to be a sign of respectability, if men of all classes used Sunday openly as a day of physical recreation and stayed away from church without any sense of being outcasts, the converse of this state of things was that the people who did go to church did not go for conventional reasons, but for spiritual reasons. Hence there had arisen a new respect for all religious observances—a respect which ceased to regard them as mutually exclusive. King Edward could attend a Requiem Mass without being misunderstood. The Pan-Anglican Conference, which assembled this year, stimulated reflections on the Englishman's religion. When such a conference had first been called, some thirty years earlier, there had been scoffing at the idea of the Church of England proposing to issue encyclicals or to command the lives of men by conclaves of bishops; that might be done by the Church of Rome, but was not, it was said, the genius of the Church of England, which would only make itself ridiculous. In 1908 the Pan-Anglican Conference met without any such assumptions, but in very good heart. Those who listened in Canterbury Cathedral to the Archbishop's address to the concourse of dignitaries from the ends of the earth may well have been startled, as their eyes fell on some recumbent archbishop of the Middle Ages, to think how puzzled he must have been if he had returned to life at that moment. Here were the leaders of a Church whose boundaries reached far, and very far, beyond anything he had dreamed, bishops

whose presence would have been to him the token of an incredible authority over the life and wealth of many nations. Yet they were listening to no discourse on control or the enriching of the Church; they were being addressed as having assembled to face humbly and patiently the advances of science and secular thought, and to consider how best in modern life the spirit of the Church might be upheld. How slowly, perhaps how scornfully, would that mediæval prince of the Church have come to the knowledge that this ecclesiastical host had gathered, not as the relentless engine he would have aspired to wield for the purging of heresy, but as a contemplative assembly! Yet if the conference met without conclusive power, it met without defiance or misgivings. Congregations in churches might be smaller than they had been; but the work of the Church in general had returned to work of faith; ethical impulses and intellectual activity were falling into line now as companions of, not the substitutes for, that central appeal.

The political year began much more briskly than it had done in 1907. A Licensing Bill was known to be in readiness, as the chief work of the session, and a scheme of Old Age Pensions was to make its appearance in connection with the Budget. A by-election in the Ashburton division of Devonshire early in January was fought with a good deal of fury. The militant suffragists had now attained a financial position which enabled them to take a prominent part in elections, and their policy of working against the Liberal caused some violent and unpleasant scenes. In the end a Liberal majority of 1283 was turned into a Conservative majority of 559. This was an unexpected shock to Ministerialists; it had the effect of concentrating the party more keenly upon its work, with a desire to achieve more social legislation than the comparatively thin harvest of the previous year.

But the session had hardly opened before it became

apparent that the Prime Minister was seriously ill. He contracted influenza, and the strain of the past two years ill disposed him to meet it. The time approached at which it was King Edward's custom to go to Biarritz, to avoid the east winds of an English spring. There was some speculation as to whether he would hold to his plans, or would feel obliged to remain at home in case of a transference of the premiership. When it was announced that he was going abroad, as usual, the general supposition was that there would be no need for changes in the Government until his return. He went to call upon Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman before leaving England, and spent an hour with him. King Edward was, as events proved, bidding farewell to a minister whose career had been in some ways as astonishing as any that ever brought a man to the right hand of the Crown. Left to bear the brunt of criticising the inception and conduct of the Boer War, he had come through the ordeal with only one phrase quoted against him, and that not an ill-tempered one. An uninspiring holder of office in earlier days, he was not a brilliant leader ; but, at the time he came into office, fight was itself the inspiration of the party under him, and all that his followers demanded was that the fire they could provide should be in hands in which it would burn clearly. He was clear and honest. He spoke plainly, and he could be silent. He knew better than to talk of one thing only, or on one level. He was kindly, and socially was never a bore ; he was not, like Mr Gladstone, an infliction to the sovereign. He had managed a difficult cabinet without leakage of secrets, and he had restored to Government a dignity of closed mouths, which it had recently come near to losing. It might be said by some that he trod on foes, rather than flourished banners, but the exclamations of the trodden-on sufficed to show his party where he was. It found him always where it expected to, and that was mainly the secret of his achievement. He died on

22nd April, and was buried at his home in Scotland. Many men found that their loss in his death was greater than they would have thought possible three or four years earlier.

He did not die as Prime Minister. He had resigned office on 5th April, having felt, no doubt, that affairs in Parliament demanded that the presence of a Prime Minister should be not lacking. Mr Asquith had been summoned to Biarritz. Again the observers of manners and customs had a theme for comment. The realm of England was left for some days without a Sovereign, a Prime Minister, or a Prince of Wales (for the Prince happened to be visiting the German Emperor in Berlin). This again was a matter of common-sense; with the rapidity of modern travel, and the constant communication by telegraph, there was no need to put the sovereign to inconvenience. Mr Asquith returned as Prime Minister, and some other changes befell. It was no surprise that Mr Lloyd George became Chancellor of the Exchequer. He had gained, before the Liberals came into office, a reputation that made him secure of a high position. The courage and debating power he had shown during the war and during the progress of the Education Bill of 1902 had been followed by a display of extraordinary platform adroitness during the fiscal controversy; he and Mr Winston Churchill had been the most persistently prominent champions on the Free Trade side. Now Mr Lloyd George had been able to add administrative reputation to his former achievements. His two chief Bills—that establishing the Census of Production, and a Bill in 1907 compelling the working in this country of patents taken out in Great Britain, under penalty of the withdrawal of the patent—had both been generally welcomed; and his settlement of the railway difficulty, followed in the early part of 1908 by the settlement of a strike of shipyard engineers on the north-east

coast, in which 30,000 men had come out against a reduction of wages, had displayed a capacity for sober and patient negotiation little expected from a man supposed by his opponents to be a courtier of the populace. None the less, his appointment to the Exchequer, though it had been anticipated, did not pass without shaking of heads. He was still, to a great part of the nation, essentially a demagogue. Mr Winston Churchill succeeded him at the Board of Trade. Lord Elgin left the Colonial Office, not unaccompanied by rumours that his more Radical colleagues had found him wanting in enterprise. He was succeeded by Lord Crewe. Mr Runciman took over the harassing post of President of the Board of Education. Mr McKenna left that office for the Admiralty.

This last change was associated with a curious story. Early in March a letter published in *The Times*—headed "Under Which King?"—disclosed the fact that Lord Tweedmouth, then first Lord of the Admiralty, had been carrying on a correspondence with the German Emperor about British and German naval policy. This was felt to be extending, to a strange degree, the doctrine of personal acquaintance in foreign relations. Such an interchange might be good, or it might be bad; but it was at any rate disturbing at a moment when our naval policy was being based more openly than ever on rivalry with Germany. The building of the *Dreadnought*, which had been so gratifying to national pride, was now perceived to be attended by most serious consequences. If battleship design was to be wholly altered, then that advantage over other nations which we had possessed in the numbers of our fleet had been in effect thrown away. If the battle fleet of the future was to be a *Dreadnought* fleet, then we started almost at scratch with other nations—at least, with only the smallest start. When the Naval Estimates of this year came up for discussion, both the Prime

Minister and Mr McKenna had to take quite openly, as the basis of debate, comparison of our position with that of Germany. Germany had passed a new Navy Law, involving the replacement of her first fighting fleet by ships of the *Dreadnought* type; Mr Asquith and Mr McKenna had to give the House their calculations of the comparative strength of the two new navies in the years when the German law would have produced its full effects, principally in regard to 1911 and 1912. This was an awkward moment for the disclosure of correspondence, however admirably intended, between Lord Tweedmouth and the dictator of the German navy. Lord Tweedmouth's resignation of the Admiralty was inevitable. He was at the time falling into bad health, and he only held for a few months the office of Lord President of the Council, to which he was transferred.

During the year the public became as keenly interested in the new cruisers of the navy as it had been in the *Dreadnought*. Turbine engines had been introduced into a class of cruisers so big and well armed that they were hardly inferior to battleships. One of these vessels, the *Indomitable*, 17,250 tons, with eight 12-inch guns, was detailed to take the Prince of Wales to Quebec in the summer. On the return she was given a speed and endurance trial right across the Atlantic. The Prince, true to his profession as a sailor, took the greatest interest in the cruiser's performance, and stood his turn at helping the stokers. The average speed made throughout the run was 24·8 knots.

The new Government required all its energy. The Licensing Bill had been introduced on 27th February, and a storm had broken about it immediately. In brief, it proposed to establish the Peel system of reduction of licences till they reached a statutory proportion to population, with payment during a definite period of compensation, in lieu of notice, for licences suppressed

before the end of that period. The statutory proportion was to be: in areas where the population averaged two to the acre, one licence to 400 persons; where the population averaged from two to twenty-five to the acre, one licence to 500 persons; and so on, up to a proportion of one licence to 1000 persons where the population averaged over two hundred to the acre. The time-limit was fourteen years. Over new licences the Bill established a system of local option; and a certain form of option was to apply to old licences after the fourteen years. It was calculated that the number of licences which would be suppressed by the operation of these proposals was about 30,000. It was certainly a drastic Bill, and, as has already been remarked, in the wide field of the brewery share market the Bill became of immediate financial concern to a very large portion of the community.[1] Those opposed to it were able to assert that, in its hostility to a specific trade, the Government was attempting to ride roughshod over the legitimate expectations of innocent persons; it was proposing to destroy assets upon the credit of which brewing firms had invited the investments of the public. Moreover, as debenture shares were open to trustee investments, a peculiarly unguarded class of the community—those who as widows or orphans or otherwise were subject to trustees in the control of their means of livelihood—would suffer. All the elements of opposition were organised skilfully. A mass meeting was held at the Queen's Hall early in March to protest against the Bill; a loftier sphere of influence was stirred at the meeting of brewery debenture-holders under Lord Rothschild. By a coincidence unfortunate for the Government, a Liberal member for a London constituency, Peckham, died just at this date. A by-election in any part of the country would have been a serious affair, but happening in London it became

[1] See p. 214.

the most amazing battlefield of contending interests. Never before had such a crop of minor political organisations sprung up to obscure the regular party battalions. Some, which were nominally independent, like the militant suffragists, were in practice anti-Liberal. Some, like the Tariff Reform League and the Free Trade Union, had become familiar at all elections for the past four years. Others, mysterious in origin, such as a body calling itself the Coal Consumers' League, were transient crystallisations of floating mistrust of the most democratic Government of modern days. Finally, the various avowed leagues of brewers and licensed victuallers naturally occupied all the space they could. The contest developed so extraordinary a character that within a few days it had became a kind of show. People from all parts of London joined the crowds in Peckham High Street, and through the packed masses round the various temporary platforms rolled waggons conveying "object-lessons"—men dressed as miners protesting against a statutory eight-hour day; imported manufactured goods with staring labels of their country of origin; woman suffragists in prison dress. The misfortune of the election, from the Liberal point of view, was not only that it occurred in a spot to which all sorts of organisations could without effort despatch their speakers, but that Peckham was a Unionist seat, only won in the general triumph of 1906, and almost sure to revert now, even without such various appeals. It did revert; the seat was won by the Unionist candidate, by nearly 2500 votes; and the opponents of the Licensing Bill scored a useful point.

It was doubtless an aftermath of this uproarious election which caused the mobbing of a meeting held by the United Kingdom Alliance in support of the Bill. But these scenes were associated with a particular kind of hostility to the Bill which the brewing firms and their supporters soon found it necessary to repudiate. They would have

preferred rather less enthusiasm on the part of the licensed victualler, who as a class was not discreet in his methods or his expressions. Anything that could be called "the public-house element" had better have been out of the way. As it was, the supporters of the Bill outside the Liberal party ranks found new texts for their advocacy in the posters displayed at the bars and the working up of bar opinion. The Archbishop of Canterbury frankly spoke in the Bill's favour, and the Bishop of London presided at a demonstration on the same side. The Bill was taken as far as the end of the first clause in Committee, and was then carried over to an autumn sitting.

There was some deploring of this postponement, on the ground of the opportunity it would give to rouse further feeling against the Bill. But a corresponding opportunity was open to advocates of the Bill, and their campaign was vigorous, and not ineffective. At any rate it was wise for the Government to give itself now to the popularity of introducing Old Age Pensions. The Budget statement (made by Mr Asquith, since the new Chancellor of the Exchequer had so lately assumed office) was cheerful. There had been a realised surplus of four and three-quarter millions, which was applied to the reduction of the National Debt. The estimated revenue for the coming year was £157,770,000 and the estimated expenditure £152,869,000. This allowed a remission of the sugar-duty, costing £3,400,000; and left enough for the cost of the first quarter's Old Age Pensions, £1,200,000, which was all that would fall on the present Finance Bill. Thus announced, the Pensions Scheme was introduced in a separate Bill. Pensions were to begin at the age of seventy years, and were to be five shillings a week. It was calculated that half-a-million people would come into the scheme, and that the cost would amount to about six millions a year. The hope was held out that in time the pensionable age would be reduced to sixty-five years.

There was criticism of the scheme from the Opposition. The Unionist theory of Old Age Pensions had always been that the scheme should carry with it some form of contribution during early life—should be, in fact, rather an insurance than a gift. But the theory had never been worked out in detail. The complaint about the free gift of the pensions was largely met by the answer that very many of the beneficiaries would, without the pension, be costing the community money as inmates of workhouses and infirmaries. Criticism of the Bill was, of course, dangerous ground; few men wished to be notable in their constituencies as opponents of Old Age Pensions; and the measure had therefore no real difficulties in the Commons. In the House of Lords, where there was no fear of constituents, opposition was rather more open. Lord Cromer went so far as to carry an amendment limiting the operation of the Bill to seven years. But this was an infringement of the privileges of the Commons, as touching finance, and the Speaker disallowed the amendment.

Mr Burns appeared in the legislative programme this year with a Housing and Town Planning Bill. Arising out of the helplessness of town councils to prevent the haphazard growth of ugly and crowded suburbs, which ate up land that might have afforded open spaces and natural amenities, the Bill empowered local authorities to acquire land for other than immediate building purposes, and to lay it out on considerations other than those of strict commercial value; and gave them some rights of control over the development of private estates. In his administrative work Mr Burns was as busy as ever. There were more prosecutions of local authorities in London—some Mile End Guardians, and some members of the Poplar and Stepney Sick Asylums Board.

It should be mentioned that in this year the Court of Criminal Appeal at last came into being. It had been

set up by an Act of 1907, and held its first sitting on 15th May 1908. Its work proved to be more expeditious and less heavy than some people had expected. Lord Halsbury had secured the introduction into the Bill of an amendment requiring that no appeal should be allowed except upon a certificate from the judge who tried the case. This was a guarantee against merely frivolous appeals, and also went some way to secure that juries should not be influenced by the chance of an appeal, a point about which a number of lawyers had been anxious.

The summer brought a new amusement, the great exhibition ground at Shepherd's Bush. It was a much more magnificent affair than Earl's Court, where the Londoner had first learned to stroll about and listen to bands. The new ground was more spacious, and modern methods of building, with iron frames and reinforced concrete walls, had conjured up, on what had been almost a swamp, a small city of structures of most entertaining flamboyance. They were occupied this year by a Franco-British Exhibition; and the *entente cordiale* was still fresh enough to render the show very popular. The President of the French Republic paid a state visit to King Edward in May, and they visited the exhibition together. With its gardens, its waterways, its electric lights, its loggia restaurants, the White City sprang into a well-advertised popularity; its amusements, such as the flip-flap and the scenic railway, suggested that the last traces of British self-consciousness had disappeared. The Olympic Games were held in England this year, and a large stadium had been built for them on the exhibition grounds. The public wearied rather quickly of watching the contests, and only the Marathon race stirred much excitement. It was run on a very hot day in July. An Italian, named Dorando, was first at the tape; but he had fallen from exhaustion fifty yards from the finish, and some officials, with unfortunate zeal, had helped him to

his feet. This was enough to disqualify him, and the race was awarded to the second man, an American, named Hayes. The results of the excitement lasted for some time, in the way that was by now growing familiar. Cheap newspapers caught at the word "Marathon," and any long race received the name; there were even in due time four-in-hand Marathons. The United States kept the affair up more specifically. The respective merits of Hayes and Dorando were fought out in three or four later races in New York. There was, on a review of the results of the Olympic Games, some chagrin that Great Britain had not fared better; the remarkable thing was that the chagrin should not have been greater. The croakers wagged their heads, and said that British youth was turning into a mere population of spectators at cricket and football matches, and had no longer any care for athletic reputation. It would have been sounder to take the view that the great spread of athletics, rather than a decline of interest in them, caused the philosophic temper with which the Olympic results were received. In the old days, when cricket and football were sports of the comparatively few, lawn tennis and swimming still more limited, and golf unknown in England, the less privileged part of the nation had to cling to the belief that its favoured members were the best athletes in the world. But now that hundreds of thousands were discovering by playing games themselves that prowess in games was difficult to attain, they had a more reasoned view, and were able to take defeat sportingly. It was because they played games now, that they could enjoy the game for its own sake. The only thoroughly satisfactory section of the Olympic Meeting, from the British point of view, was the regatta at Henley, where Great Britain swept the card.

Soon after the autumn session began, the authorities took more severe action against the militant suffragists

than they had hitherto cared to take. On several occasions throughout the year there had been scenes of disorder. In January women attempted to force an entrance to the Prime Minister's residence, while the Cabinet was sitting; and the arrest of some of the women and their conveyance to the police station took place amid riotous scenes. A few days later the houses of various ministers were visited, and windows were broken. On 11th February there was another attempt to march a large procession to the House of Commons, and some fifty women were arrested; and two days later about ten of another deputation were arrested. At the end of June, after a further fight with the police in Parliament Square, there were twenty-nine arrests. The Women's Social and Political Union had grown enormously in numbers and influence; an offshoot from it, the Women's Freedom League, was pursuing much the same methods of propaganda. The union had considerable funds; and women of wealth and education, attracted by the focussing power of a single objective, threw in their lot with the new societies. Thousands of women also who had never seriously considered the political or legal position of their sex embraced with fervour a fiery presentation of the wrongs and slights to which it was subject. The Government was confronted with large numbers of women who, considering themselves outlaws under the existing system, determined to defy every convention or statute which had hitherto bound political action, whether it were an old law against assemblages within a certain distance of the Houses of Parliament, the customs governing behaviour at public meetings, or the conventions surrounding private life. Moreover, they exacted the infliction of the penalties most likely to offend public taste. They refused to pay fines, and went to prison, adding thus not only an appearance of harshness in the attitude of the authorities, but a new form of attack on

masculine government by agitation as to the conditions of prison life. Their answer to every protest against their behaviour was that the Government could put an end to it in a moment, by carrying a Woman Suffrage measure. To any objections on the ground of party disagreement on the subject, or the comparative indifference of the electorate, their answer was that the women's demand for a vote was a fundamental demand.

Undoubtedly the agitation had completely altered the status of Woman Suffrage as a political question. In earlier years the efforts of suffrage societies had but slowly gathered adherents, and the mass of people never gave a thought to the matter. Now it was argued at street-corner meetings in every by-election; campaigns were conducted up and down the country; clever women speakers caught in the open-air people who would never have entered an ordinary meeting. Opposition and criticism of the methods pursued were persistent; but that fact was in itself a great proof of the advance. Formerly the subject had hardly been vital enough to stir opposition. The older societies were themselves invigorated. Their dislike of violent methods became tempered by their admiration for the devotion and courage displayed, and by gratitude that the demand had been made real to the public. So the older societies joined with the new in great processions and demonstrations, such as those of the summer of 1908 in London. The processions were not only great in numbers, but were at times artistically impressive.

Another riot in Parliament Square on 13th October was attended by circumstances that led the authorities to take fresh steps. On 11th October a meeting had been held in Trafalgar Square, and handbills were distributed inviting the public to "help the suffragettes to rush the House of Commons." On this, summonses were issued against three of the most prominent leaders of the Women's

Social and Political Union for inciting to an illegal act, and as the summonses were disregarded the three were arrested. Parliament Square was held by police on the evening of the 13th, and women again marched up in detachments to struggle with the cordons. The handbill did not seem to have had any effect upon the public; the crowd retained its usual attitude of curiosity and amusement; but twenty-one women were arrested. The three leaders endeavoured to give importance to their case at Bow Street by issuing subpœnas to Mr Gladstone, as Home Secretary, and Mr Lloyd George, who had been present at the meeting in Trafalgar Square. But as a great many of the questions put for the defence were of a kind easy for the magistrate to disallow, the move was not effective. Nor was the attempt to prove that the word "rush" was not intended to be an incitement to violence. In default of being bound over in sureties to keep the peace, the three defendants went to prison. By this time the question was arising whether women suffragists in prison should be treated as political offenders and placed in the first division. Other uncomfortable questions were raised when, at a large suffrage meeting in the Albert Hall, at the end of November, militant suffragists interrupting Mr Lloyd George's speech were ejected with some violence from the audience. The policy of interrupting public meetings had long been pursued; and the irritation of audiences at the hampering of well-known speakers had already led to unpleasant scenes; but this occasion at the Albert Hall was the most important that had yet occurred. Briefly, the situation at the end of 1908 was that the whole subject of woman suffrage was on a new plane of reality; support which had hitherto been given from considerations of expediency, or with the idea that the movement would not have any immediate importance, had fallen away; on the other hand genuinely convinced politicians were formulating distinct schemes, some for partial

woman suffrage, giving the vote to women occupiers and to married women whose husbands were qualified, or to women occupiers alone, others for complete adult suffrage. Finally the presence of a large body of women refusing to recognise anything but a Government measure, brought in at once, had united all women suffragists in a demand that the present Government should attend to the matter; and the general public, fairly sure that nothing of the kind would be done at present, looked on, partly with indifference, partly with a vague feeling that the women had a good case, partly with resentment at the way they were pressing it. The elections in this year of two women as mayors, Mrs Garrett Anderson at Aldeburgh, and Miss Dove at High Wycombe, were useful to the feminist cause.

Just before Parliament met for the autumn sitting there was a great demonstration in Hyde Park against the Licensing Bill. Special trains from all parts of the country brought up contingents. The Commons pursued their work on the Bill unmoved by the spectacle. Surmises were rife as to the treatment the Bill would receive in the House of Lords. It was to be expected that drastic amendments would be introduced. But the support which prominent members of the Bench of Bishops had given to the Bill, together with a feeling that important Unionist peers would not wish to identify themselves too strongly with the licensed victualling trade, led to the hope that the amendments would not be beyond negotiation. There was great amazement when the fate of the Bill was actually settled by the Peers without the formality of waiting for a debate upon it. A meeting was held at Lansdowne House on 24th November, at which a resolution was taken to reject the Bill, as not advancing genuine temperance reform, while causing inconvenience to many of his Majesty's subjects, and violating the principles of equity. This meeting soon came to be regarded as a

tactical error. It had not been easy hitherto to make the question of the powers of the House of Lords appeal stirringly to Liberals. Even after the failure of the Education Bill, though a stout Radical core of the party was for a campaign against the House of Lords, the mass of Liberal electors felt only a grievance for which abolition or curtailment of the powers of the Lords seemed to be a remedy rather out of proportion. But the complete rejection of a measure, which was the outcome of much Liberal campaigning and of long-established tendencies, by a private meeting of peers, called forth a very different feeling, and was, indeed, a very different assertion of power. Besides, it affected the Liberal party in the Commons differently from the loss of the Education Bill. It produced a more profound sense of struggling against unfair odds, and a more angry resentment. There was no longer any doubt that the results of the election of 1906 had implied something which could not continue to exist without challenging the House of Lords. Before the year ended there had been more than one hint of the form of that challenge. The financial powers of the Commons had hitherto been regarded as supreme. If the recovery of the monopoly value of licences by the State after a limited period of years was refused by the Lords, steps could be taken to obtain a greater share of that monopoly value at once in the Finance Bill. At the same time, with the establishment of Old Age Pensions and a certainty of heavy Naval Estimates, the time was ripe for giving taxation a wider grip upon private wealth. That Radical Budget which had been foretold during the election was now in the making; and there was little concealment of the fact that it was to be the ultimate challenge to the Lords.

CHAPTER XV

1909-1910 : THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET

EVERYTHING in the following year seemed to conspire to keep the country at a pitch of excitement in which it would, so to speak, take a general election in its stride—a state of affairs always fortunate for the party in office.

First of all wireless telegraphy stirred the public. A large Atlantic liner, the *Republic*, was rammed at sea by an Italian emigrant steamer, the *Florida*. Urgent distress signals were sent abroad by wireless, the *Baltic* (of the same line of steamers as the *Republic*) hurried to the rescue, and was in time to arrest disastrous loss of life. The marvellous summoning of ships from far beyond sight or sound vastly struck the popular imagination. It seemed to diminish almost unbelievably the perils of the sea.

Dramatically following this achievement of civilisation came an incident which seemed to show that, the more civilisation advanced, the more easily could its machinery be jarred by any who did not shrink from extremes of force. Two foreigners robbed a clerk in a Tottenham street of eighty pounds, which he was carrying from the bank to pay wages. They sprang upon a tram, forced the driver with a pistol at his head to drive on, and fired vigorously upon their pursuers. They shot dead a policeman and a boy. Leaving the tram, they made a final dash on foot, still using their weapons. Fourteen more people were wounded, and then, as the chase closed on them, both men shot themselves. One was found dead beside a ditch; the

other, who had taken refuge in a cottage, terrifying all its inhabitants, was found so badly wounded that he died soon after in hospital. Civilisation, it might be said, had after all reasserted itself, not in the mere finish of the chase, but in the extraordinary unconsciousness of peril with which the crowd kept up the pursuit. Miscreants might, it appeared, reckon on a modern citizen having forgotten that pistols existed. He had indeed so far forgotten as to have little fear.

Events of a different kind stirred other sections of the community. The long-expected report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law was issued in January, and proved to be two reports. Both groups of the commissioners agreed in recommending the extinction of boards of guardians ; but while the majority desired the appointment of new specific authorities, controlling large areas, working on a wider and less penal theory, and exterminating the old ignominious associations of poor relief, the minority wished to see the various branches of Poor Law work separated from one another and placed under existing local authorities, so that in fact no Poor Law should continue to be. Mr John Burns, in whose department this matter fell, held out no hopes of legislation on either report. He believed that he had power, by orders of the Local Government Board, to go very far towards breaking up the rigidities of the Poor Law, and its combination of processes better attended to separately. He preferred proceeding by administrative detail to introducing a Bill, which must inevitably suffer by criticisms aimed upon it from all angles of detail at once. Mr Burns had by this time fallen far out of favour with Labour representatives, largely because of his apparent indifference to their eagerness for Labour legislation.

In Labour circles, the interest of the moment was the resignation of Mr Ramsay Macdonald, Mr Keir Hardie, Mr Philip Snowden and Mr Bruce Glasier from the

National Council of the Labour party, "owing to the movement of irresponsibility which has grown up inside the party." In the previous year a resolution had been carried by a rather narrow majority at the Labour Party's annual conference, identifying the party with socialism. Previously there had been no such identification. The carrying of the resolution followed upon the appearance among Labour members of Parliament of Mr Victor Grayson. He had made it clear that he was hostile to the Labour party's general method of co-operation with the Liberals. He was an advanced socialist, and parliamentary methods were to him a middle-class sham. For defying the rules of the House, in pursuance of this conviction, he had been suspended in October 1908. This was the most public sign of the "irresponsible spirit" against which the leaders of the party now protested. The party was in an uneasy position. One of the effects of the general election had been to put capital on its guard. Labour was to be shown that, if it had advanced far, it had not a secure base to rely upon. The refusal of recognition to trade unions by masters was a step in this direction. Another, and a more serious one, was the discovery, by a judgment of the Court of Appeal delivered late in November 1908, that a compulsory levy by the unions on their members for purposes of parliamentary representation was not sound in law. Unable really to affect the Government's position in the division lobbies, yet losing ground with its own supporters because it failed to press for more Labour legislation; suspecting that masters of labour in many industries were not indisposed to let the unions try their power, on the chance that the public would weary of strikes, and the unions would find out weaknesses in themselves—the Labour party seemed in 1909 to retain little of the triumphant glow of 1906. Yet two of the measures of this year were directly for the amelioration of labour. One was the Trade Boards Bill,

setting up boards with power to appoint a legal wage in certain industries peculiarly subject to sweating. The other was the Labour Exchanges Bill, dividing England into ten divisions, each with a clearing-house for labour co-ordinated with a central clearing-house in London; 30 or 40 exchanges were set up in large towns, 45 in smaller towns, and 150 minor offices. A joint advisory committee was to be formed from representatives of employers and employed in every large centre, under the chairmanship of a permanent official. Any person out of work could apply for registration at one of the exchanges; and if openings were found in other places applicants were to be given cards which would provide lodging at Poor Law Institutions on the way, without incurring the disabilities attaching to poor relief. Unemployment had been given a new voice by the strange and almost fantastic organisation of the "hunger marchers." These men were not appealing quite vaguely for aid; they were banded together on a theory that work could be found, and even a modest competence, for the unemployed, by putting them to cultivate waste lands. But the majority of them hardly had the determination required to sustain life on cabbages and potatoes; that freedom of soul was confined chiefly to their extremely idealist leader.

The great battle in Parliament was not long in coming to a head. The King's Speech called attention to the fact that, owing to the necessary provision of money for Old Age Pensions and the increased Naval Estimates, the Budget would require both long and serious discussion, and would be the principal business of the year. On 29th April it was introduced. The cost of Old Age Pensions had, it appeared, been under-estimated; it would be a good deal more than six millions, and indeed the Opposition was not far out when it put the cost at something like twelve millions. The charge for this service, and the demands of

the navy, meant a prospective deficit, as taxation stood, of fifteen and three-quarter millions. The first step towards meeting this would be to diminish the provision for repayment of the National Debt by three millions. Then came the unfolding of new methods of taxation. The distinction between earned and unearned incomes was to be carried further. On all earned incomes under £3000 the income-tax was to remain at 9d.; on earned incomes over that figure and on all unearned incomes the tax was to be 1s. 2d.; on incomes over £5000 a super tax of 6d. was to be paid on the amount by which they exceeded £3000. Lower middle-class incomes were relieved by an abatement, on those below £500, of £10 of the income for every child under sixteen years of age. Next came landed property. A tax of 20 per cent. was levied on "unearned increment" in land values, payable on the sale of land, on leases for more than fourteen years, and on the passing of land or landed interest at death, the increase in the value to be reckoned from 30th April 1909, or from the last payment of the tax. Agricultural land, small residences, and small holdings were exempted. A duty of a halfpenny in the pound was levied on undeveloped land, where the site value was over £50 an acre. In the original proposal the same duty was levied on ungotten minerals; but this was altered in committee to a tax of one shilling in the pound on mineral royalties. Next came the turn of the licensed victualling trade. A tax of 50 per cent. was laid on the annual value of all licences, hotels and restaurants to have the alternative of paying either 25 per cent. of the annual value or a duty according to the proportion borne by sales of intoxicating liquor to total sales. A proposed duty of threepence in the pound on the sales of liquor in clubs was altered in committee to a duty of sixpence in the pound on the club's purchase of liquor. The spirit-duty was increased by 3s. 9d. a gallon; the tobacco-duty by 8d. a pound. A graduated tax was

placed on motor vehicles used for other than business purposes, and a tax was also placed upon petrol.

The outcry against such a Finance Bill was immediate. Super-taxation was denounced as a deliberate piece of class legislation ; taxation of land values even more so. The Government was warned that the cost of the enormous labour of land valuation, which must be undertaken in order to provide a starting point for assessment of increment, would so far swallow up the proceeds of the tax that its unprofitableness would expose it as a mere vindictive attack. Licence-holders equally asserted that the new duties falling upon them were a piece of revenge for the failure of the Licensing Bill. On the Liberal side there was satisfaction at the determination to prove that under a Free Trade system taxation still had its elasticity, and that Tariff Reform could not be advanced as the only method of meeting steadily growing expenditure. A Budget that could deal immediately with a deficit of fifteen and three-quarter millions could afford to include proposals for land taxes, which must, when once the valuation was accomplished, bring in an ever-increasing revenue. Moreover, such a valuation, with the accompanying tax on undeveloped land, would tend to bring land into the market, and so meet a bitter Radical grievance. The Conservative answer was that it would bring so much land into the market that prices would fall disastrously, the countryside meanwhile being everywhere robbed of the old relation between great landowners and their people.

It was not, in spite of Lord Rosebery and others who applied this epithet to it, a " revolutionary " Budget. People who spoke of it in that way had presumably little acquaintance with the doctrines of the land-taxers, the single-taxers, and others who wished to see new principles of taxation rather than even the most drastic readjustment of existing principles. The Budget was, indeed, a social

rather than an economic achievement. For twenty years past the rich had been growing richer ; very large incomes were much more numerous than they used to be ; and it was equally true that high middle-class incomes, running well into the thousands, were much more numerous. The super tax was, in a sense, the State's claim for a return on the amazing field it had opened by the Limited Liability Acts, and on all the indirect services by which it rendered possible a world-wide trade. But to many reformers it appeared that the time was ripe for fundamental reconsideration of taxing. Strong as the present Budget was, it was of the old family of Budgets in its combination of direct and indirect taxation, its gathering of a handful here and a handful there. Pitt would have understood what it was all about.

However, opposition to the Finance Bill was not likely to enter into considerations such as these. The proposals aimed high and far. Mr Lloyd George supported them in a speech at Limehouse, which was seized upon as a frank, if not shameless, confession of legislating against one class for the sake of another. " Class " by this time had come to mean almost entirely a distinction of wealth. In the heat of the controversy men threatened to sell their estates, and invest the money abroad ; women threatened to dismiss servants ; financiers to transfer their business to foreign capitals. Yet it remained a most striking fact that not all the loudly proclaimed uneasiness about a Radical Government, not all the fear of democratic upheaval and the power of trade unions, hampered the growth of trade. The monthly returns advanced almost without a check. Consols were falling ; but the rate of interest on them was so low that in the great modern field of investment they could not possibly find a strong market. At any rate, trade in general remained so buoyant as almost to suggest that a democratic government which kept the peace abroad was less disturbing to business, when all

was said and done, than a Conservative government which broke that peace.

It must be said that below the surface the atmosphere was not altogether calm. The year 1909 witnessed a very acute stage of naval rivalry between Great Britain and Germany. Public opinion was agitated by a violent outburst of criticism of the Admiralty's policy, in which Lord Charles Beresford was prominent. Nor was it quieted when, on the production of the Naval Estimates, the Prime Minister and Mr McKenna stated that the comparisons they had made in the previous year had been based upon an erroneous assumption as to the rate of construction of ships in German yards. The crucial moment was now put at March 1912, when it appeared that on existing arrangements Great Britain would have twenty Dreadnoughts and Germany seventeen. The Government's policy showed some consciousness of uncertainty by including in the programme of new construction four "contingent" ships, to be laid down if the German naval programme appeared to threaten the margin of superiority. These ships were in addition to four definitely on the year's programme. Sir Edward Grey announced that, if the Government found information as to the progress of German building difficult to obtain, it would give Great Britain the benefit of the doubt; and, in fact, on 26th July, Mr McKenna announced that the "contingent" ships would be laid down at once.

These proceedings brought vigorous criticism on the Ministry from a large section of its supporters. England appeared to these critics to be pursuing not a line of international understanding and plain dealing; but a policy of combinations of Powers from which she had for many years now been fortunately free. The agreement with France, which had been so generally welcomed at first, seemed now to be rather more like an alliance, though not one in technical terms. The agreement with Russia was too much like the old sort of diplomatic sequel to be

popular with Liberals; and the meetings between King Edward and the Tsar at Reval in 1908 and at Cowes in 1909 had been attended by a less general sympathy than had attached to the King's relations with the French.

Even the Budget and the Naval Estimates had other excitements and interests to compete with. Indeed, discussion on the latter point was entirely swept out of the public mind for a few days by the fact that, just after the estimates had been introduced, telegrams arrived from Lieutenant Shackleton, the leader of an Antarctic expedition, conveying the news of a journey which had so nearly reached the South Pole that for all practical purposes the feat had been accomplished. By a curious coincidence, the North Pole took also in this year its share of popular excitement. On 1st September it was announced that an American, Dr Cook, had returned to the habitable confines of the Arctic circle, having been successful in reaching the North Pole in April 1908. This thrilling news was amazingly followed by an announcement, five days later, that Peary had reached the Pole in April 1909. Peary's name was well known; he had done already much Arctic exploration. Dr Cook's name was not known at all. By itself the first announcement had not been regarded with any deep suspicion; the world was prepared to await Dr Cook's account of his performance, and the production of his observations. But when Peary's announcement was made, the liveliest controversy was seen to be looming ahead; he would not like to have been beaten. Both men returned to civilisation. On the face of it, Dr Cook's story was less convincing than Peary's, and his statement that he had left his scientific records behind in Greenland was a particularly weak point. Peary pursued his rival with determination; he went and interviewed the Esquimaux whom Dr Cook had designated as his companions for the greater part of his journey, and their evidence was sufficient in the public mind

to destroy, finally, the claims of Dr Cook. Peary's achievement was real. His observations passed the scrutiny of scientists and Polar explorers; and the discovery of the North Pole was acknowledged to have been made.

In the summer mechanical flight was seen to have advanced with a rapidity which took people's breath away, when they reflected that it was little more than twelve months since the first public flight. Not only was the thing being done almost daily in France, but already daring pioneers had discovered that single planes would keep them in the air, instead of the double planes which made a rather cumbrous machine. In July a machine of the new type crossed the Channel and came safely to earth in a field behind Dover Castle. It was piloted by M. Blériot. An attempt to cross on a monoplane had been made on 12th July by M. Latham, but his motor failed and he fell into the sea. After M. Blériot's success, on 25th July, M. Latham tried again on the 26th, but again his motor failed, this time when he had almost reached the English coast. The aeronauts had waited some time on the French side for favourable weather. But, before the year was out, the conception of what was possible weather for flying had undergone a great change. Nothing was more extraordinary about the progress of flying than the rapidity with which it made its advances. Machines as clear and simple in their lines as a great dragon-fly had been evolved within twelve months from the double-plane machines. Now in the autumn of 1909 men affronted in the air winds which even in the summer of that same year would have been considered prohibitive of flight. Several aviation meetings had taken place in France before England saw one. On 15th October a flying week began at Blackpool. There M. Farman first surprised the people by flying for half-an-hour in gusty and uncertain weather; but the final sensation was provided by M. Latham's flight twice round

the course in a wind that seemed to the spectators not far from a gale. Some persons put the strength of the wind at forty miles an hour. After this, aeroplanes may be said to have shaken off the last disbelief in their future. They were not any longer toys for a still day.

Besides being the flying year in England, 1909 was also the motor-cab year. Although these cabs were principally a London affair, and were only introduced in other large towns slowly and in comparatively small numbers, they had a significance not confined to London. The first great epoch of the motor car had closed. The period of the enthusiasm of pioneers and the period of large, kingly, powerful machines for the fortunate few had expanded into a period of moderate, admirably efficient cars for people of merely comfortable incomes. But other grades of income and social position had to be tapped, if the motor manufacturers were to create the market required by establishments set up at the highest point of the boom. Could cars be made cheaply enough for use as cabs, and at the same time well enough to stand the inevitably severe wear and tear? For a year or two experiments in this direction had been discouraging. But with perseverance success was attained; and once the new cabs, fitted with taximeters, had become numerous enough to avoid disappointing a public ready to look out for them, their advance was unchecked. The speed of the new conveyances, the ease of their motion, combined with the positiveness of the taximeter in place of the weary old uncertainty of cab fares, delighted the public. Moreover, Londoners possessed for the first time a closed cab which was clean and pleasant. Motor omnibuses had for months past been ousting the horsed omnibuses. In spite of their noisiness they offered advantages of speed which made their future assured. When motor cabs came with a rush, in 1909, the streets of London underwent suddenly that change which had not been expected to

occur for a generation at least.[1] A typical photograph of such a spot as Broadway, Westminster, in the coronation year showed not a single motor vehicle; motors then were the private conveyances of the rich. A photograph of the same spot in 1909 showed hardly any horsed vehicles, and such as there were, were tradesmen's vans. The change had several points of subsidiary interest. Humanitarians rejoiced to see the disappearance of horses from the inevitably cruel work of drawing omnibuses on hard, and too often slippery, streets. The controllers of traffic saw the advantage of vehicles taking up far less room than those drawn by horses. Sanitary authorities and officers of health began to look forward to a day when the detritus of town roadways would cease to be offensive and dangerous to human life. In a more general respect, this familiarising of the public with the use of motors practically put an end to the old outcries against them. Wealthy owners of big powerful cars, it is true, no longer wanted so much to show them off; but the hirer of a taxicab had his share in the change, by ceasing to regard cars as privileged possessions. The success of the motor cabs was also one more proof of a widely spread increase in the means of middle-class people, and an equally wide inclination to spend money. The cabs were more expensive to maintain than the old horsed cabs; and could not have become so numerous without a considerable increase in the habit of hiring cabs. Such general considerations as these make the appearance of the taxicab a matter of national, and not merely London, interest.

In the campaign which, during the summer, Liberal members fought for the Finance Bill, its value as a triumphant assertion of Free Trade played a great part. The Tariff Reform movement had hardly been checked at all by the general election; its advocates confessed that the country needed more education on the subject than they

[1] See p. 194.

perhaps had foreseen; and they laid themselves out to provide it. But the leader of the movement, the source of the power which it had attained over the public mind, the man who had been able to give such new life to the idea of a tariff that men forgot all the Fair Trade movement of the eighties and all the more recent talk about a broader basis of taxation, and thought of Tariff Reform as a new thing, sprung up in a single conception—this leader had fallen out of the fight. Mr Chamberlain had had a paralytic stroke; and, although hopes were entertained of his recovering from the worst effects of it, he was not expected to be active in politics again. Few men had lived as hard in political life as he had. If he had missed the supreme prize of political power, he had attained a personal influence in the nation such as a great many Prime Ministers had missed; and his was one of the names that could not drop out of the political history of his country. Even apart from the details of his career, he would stand for some of the most remarkable developments of middle-class politics that had ever taken place. His most ardent followers were not the young men, but the men of ripe years and experience. This was the truth of the admiration for him as a "business man" in politics. He was not really that, so much as an idealist. But he caught the imagination of the business man as no one else had ever done. Without bringing it to such a pitch of formulation as Disraeli achieved with Young England, he stood for England in the Prime of Life, and that was the robust core of his Imperialism. He saw Great Britain as the father with grown sons—the situation in which old home instinct must be replaced by some new bond of interest and understanding, if the family is to hold together.

England lost in this year two mighty voices—Swinburne and George Meredith. Widely different as their work was, a like fire had inflamed their genius. Both

had been gloriously kindled by the uprising of Italy; the manhood of both found its brightest hopes, the object of its most ardent admiration, in the triumph of the French Republic. Some of the noblest passages that either of them wrote resound with the feet of marching nations. But Swinburne, flooded with passionate exaltation, fixed his rapt eyes upon the flutter of banners; Meredith scrutinised the faces of the men that marched. Consequently Meredith's spirit, less carried away by the rushing wings of the *Mater Triumphalis*, was saved from the savage depression of *The Halt before Rome*. In truth, the likeness of their youthful inspiration falls into insignificance before the unlikeness of their maturity. One was a visionary, the other a seer. Swinburne, early acclaimed by eager youth, had for some time before his death passed his zenith. Impatient, overbearing, he lost sight of humanity when the flags no longer waved. Life ebbed from his palaces of poetry; and too often the later structures he raised seemed designed to put artifice in the place of life. He came to dwell increasingly upon the past of England, rather than on the present or the future; the poems he published during the Boer War had only this mechanical inspiration. Meredith, on the other hand, had turned early, not only from the flamboyances of poetry, but from ordinary conceptions of that art, to "strike earth," and in his poetry, as in his fiction, to probe the facts underlying existence. His noble work was strengthened, not sapped, by the passing years; life ran ever more strongly into the moulds of his thought. It does not fall within the scope of this book to appraise his position in literature. But the immense influence he exerted upon the minds of intelligent English men and women, and his Liberal creed triumphantly upheld during a long life, are historical facts. Men felt at his death both how giant-like was the personality that had fallen, and how his unswerving insight had broadened the realm of the spiritual.

The Liberal stake on the Finance Bill was high. Lord Lansdowne intimated early in August that the House of Lords was ready to try conclusions on that issue. This meant that the long-established immunity of financial measures from the power of the House of Lords was to be set aside, and the conflict between the two Houses raised in a form which must bring about a general election. If Liberals were beaten, they would not only be put back in a position in which their next return to power must be under the same ultimate control of their proposals; they would also have given Tariff Reformers the right to say that the electors did not support the kind of finance which a Free Trade Government must pursue, in its need for money. The conclusion would be that the country was prepared to see a Tariff Reform Budget. The game was played through. The House of Lords, taking its stand chiefly on the argument that this was not, in the old sense, a financial measure, but a bundle of legislation tied round with the Budget string, and arguing also that tradition forbade the Lords to amend the Commons' proposals for finance, but did not forbid them to reject, threw out the Finance Bill. The Liberals, winning the election, won not only their Budget, but also a long step in the conflict between their party and the House of Lords. It was now clear that as heavy a stake had been laid down by the other side as the Liberals had put on the table. Electors had decided outright on a question between the two Houses; and not even Mr Gladstone had been able to bring the country to that point before.

Nor was this all. The Liberal party returned to office on this second occasion diminished to some degree in numbers, but vastly more sure of its ground. The results in 1906 had had some of the unsatisfactory character of a "freak." Liberals, not having expected any such overwhelming triumph, were rather at a loss to gauge the feeling behind it. In so far as that feeling had been one

of irritated impatience with the late Unionist Ministry, it would be likely to turn into equal irritation with advanced Radical legislation. Moreover the very general belief that the results were due more to Labour than to Liberalism had caused some uneasiness in the Ministerial party, and some mistrust of the Government's being driven further than it was wise at the moment to go. That uncertainty, too, was swept away by this second election, following on the course of events in the Parliament of 1906. The Labour party had achieved the principal items of its programme—the Trade Disputes Act, Old Age Pensions, measures aimed at dealing with unemployment and sweating. The passing of these Acts had revealed the Labour party as devoid of any systematic new principle of politics—as advanced Radicals rather than revolutionaries; and advanced radicalism, though enough to keep Conservatives anxious, was not enough to make Liberals afraid, as many had been in 1906, of a remaking of their party creed. Finally, the effect of this second election was to suggest that, if in 1906 the country had embarked upon an experiment, it had not been appalled by the results. Free Trade had, of course, again played a considerable part. But the Liberals stood now to be judged on accomplishment, not merely on expectations; and their return to power was free from much of the ambiguity that had attended their position before.

From this time Unionists began to face at last the fact that the mind of the country was deeply altered. This does not mean that it had become necessarily more Radical. But the Unionist party had not perceived that it was itself as much a party of change as the Liberal party was. Tariff Reform was not, as some Liberals were apt to say, pure reaction. It was not the traditional Protectionist policy of Mr Chaplin. It was a transmutation of previous movements into a new spirit of change, of national self-consciousness alike in foreign and

colonial affairs, of industrial efficiency and economic sociology as the governing factors in domestic affairs. Unionists now at length awoke to the fact that unconsciously they had swum as much with the altered social current as the Liberals had done consciously. The Social Reform group that was shortly to appear on the Unionist side was really an acknowledgment that that party depended no less than Liberals upon the interest it could arouse in a nation which, rendered lively by the high-pitched notes of its newspapers, by the universal spread of the means for having a good time, by a spirited liberty in its tastes, and an incessant opening of new vistas in scientific invention, rallied no longer to old party cries.

The Government, assured now of the passing of its Finance Bill, could not rest here. A Bill for regulating the relations between the two Houses of Parliament must follow, if the Ministry was to hold its supporters together. But an event intervened which caused this measure to belong to a new era rather than to the one with which these volumes deal.

When King Edward went abroad, for his usual spring visit to Biarritz, it was known that he was not in good health. Indeed, he had not been as well as usual when he paid that visit in 1909 ; and the year had been an anxious one for him. During the later stages of the Finance Bill, when the intentions of the House of Lords had been made clear, he had taken the unusual step of receiving in audience Lord Lansdowne and Mr Balfour; and the nation had thus known that the King was giving more than a formal attention to the course of politics. On his return from Biarritz, in 1910, it was at first announced that he was the better for the change. But early in May his condition again gave rise to anxiety. The end came quickly. On the morning of 6th May a most serious bulletin brought back to the gates of Buckingham Palace the same sort of quiet, troubled crowd that had kept watch there in June 1902.

In the evening the physicians had to state that the King's condition was critical, and after that the people prolonged the vigil into the night. At about ten o'clock, on the announcement that no further bulletin would be issued, the waiting groups dispersed. Only a few remained when, shortly after midnight, it became known that the King had passed away. He had spent the day sitting up, fully dressed, conscious, and quite fearless. But his fits of coughing grievously exhausted him; and during the evening his heart ceased to respond to the oxygen which had been administered to him since the previous evening.

King Edward was genuinely mourned. He was a popular figure; he had a deep instinct for the popular occasion, while avoiding anything approaching a democratic pose. Often as it was possible to see the King on his way in and out of town, London did not, as a matter of fact, see him in the casual way in which some capitals see their sovereigns. He was not to be met riding out simply with an equerry, as the German Emperor might be met in Berlin, or walking, as King Leopold used to walk in Brussels, and King Christian in Copenhagen. No doubt, with his keen sense of fitness, King Edward saw that the long retirement of Queen Victoria made such ways unsuitable. Englishmen would have felt no real ease in seeing him thus. But on the other hand, when his colt Minoru won the Derby in 1909, he went down with the frankest simplicity into the crowd to lead in the winner; and his concern for housing and for hospital work showed in surprise visits paid without any formalities to workmen's dwellings and hospitals. Moreover, after the remoteness of the sovereign at the end of Queen Victoria's reign, King Edward's appearances at the theatre of an evening, a glimpse of his face through the window of a quiet brougham bringing him back from a dinner-party at some friend's house, made men feel he was living among them in a way they understood.

That comprehensibility was largely the secret of his influence. He was felt to be a man of the world. At the time of his accession there were some people who considered that aspect of his character as a drawback. They were people who did not comprehend the tradition to which King Edward belonged. He himself, belonging to the old "high life"—perhaps, indeed, the last survivor of it—fully perceived the changes that had occurred. Up to the seventies of the nineteenth century there had existed a class of rich, well-born people whose amusements and wildnesses took place on a kind of stage, at which the rest of the London world gazed. Stories ran current, tales of doings at race meetings, card-tables and theatres. Yet the gossip was never sniggering or familiar, because the difference in the means and the habits of life between those who were on that stage and those who were not was clearly defined, and was never questioned. But during the eighties, with the rise of new wealth and the breaking-down of distinctions of birth, that old spectacular world had disappeared. Most of its members had fallen into the manners of the new sets, and lost their tradition. King Edward preserved his. He liked card-playing; he loved horse racing; he enjoyed the theatre; he paid visits to Paris; he understood a good dinner. Yet he could draw his lines very sharply. His style of betting, his objection to high card-play in drawing-rooms, his careful regard for Sunday, were not quite comprehensible to the younger generations of men about town. These were all natural to the men of the sixties, who, if they went far themselves, were perfectly clear as to the necessity of maintaining observances which should prevent less exalted people from upsetting society. Consequently gossip about the King, flavoured with the publicity of the old spectacular "high life," and therefore genial and almost loyal, came to be perceived as different from the gossip, generally vulgar and often contemptuous or resentful, which grew up round

the modern rich sets, extravagant and idle without being exclusive or picturesque.

King Edward's revival of frequent state appearances, royal processions in London and royal visits to other parts of his kingdom, did much to strengthen the prestige of the Crown. The populace liked the cheerful shows, and the Londoner became amusingly keen on recognising the familiar figures of the Court. The trading community profited by the brisker flow of money in London life. Republicanism, of which the England of 1880 had some real fear, had first begun to decline when advanced Labour leaders were absorbed in the vigorous Trade Union movement of the later eighties. King Edward's pleasant activities made the sovereign a more human and less sentimental figure to the popular imagination than Queen Victoria had ever been; and republicanism in consequence appeared not so much an objectionable political doctrine as a form of rather gratuitous rudeness to an English gentleman.

King Edward's reign was not long; yet his personality may prove to be sufficient to attach his name to a period. With his varied interests and pleasures (he was not a great reader, and had no need to be, since he could be sure of personal touch with the men who knew things and did things) he may stand as representing the inclination of his time to call in question hard and fast judgments. The inclination was not confined to moral distinctions; it dissolved also many conventions of class. It proceeded, too, from various motives. The breaking-down of the old barriers of society in London originated largely in the aristocrat's becoming aware how good a time was to be had in houses commanding new resources of wealth; and in the consequent challenging of the tradition that it was right to go to certain houses, and visit people who fulfilled certain conditions, but wrong to go to others, however inviting. Again, the spread of sports and games may be

traced to the same spirit. While it was right only for a class of more or less favoured persons to spend their money or their time on out-of-door pursuits, it had been snobbery on the part of middle-class folk to amuse themselves in the same way. But when the traditional distinction had been called in question, the ordinary man was free to get all the pleasure in exercise he could, without being accused of aping his betters.

It is curiously characteristic of this period that the word "respectable" practically ceased to have any weight in upper and middle-class life, where of old it had borne a moral significance. There still were most excellent reasons for doing or not doing various things, but that it would or would not be "respectable" to do them ceased entirely to be a guidance in conduct. It would have been difficult to imagine King Edward governing his opinions or actions by such a word, though quite possible to imagine Queen Victoria's employing it. King Edward had his conventions ; as has been remarked, they appeared stringent at times to younger men about town. He drew lines too at points where he believed harm to others came in. It is open to moralists to argue that such lines afford small defence when once rigid distinction between good and bad has been abandoned. But if not so easy of definition, the newer standards appealed to a public in love with common-sense as an ideal, and in love, too, with science, hygiene, experimental politics, and other such matters in which right and wrong were inapplicable epithets.

King Edward, genial, experienced, but never disillusioned, may well stand at the head of a period of English life enfranchised from strict upbringing, making mistakes, spending rather wildly, inclined to be noisy, but on the whole demanding reality, and seeking more delicate estimations of character than were to be achieved by hard and fast rules.

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